

The Lebor Feasa Runda

A Druidic Grammar of Celtic Lore and Magic



Steven L. Akins

the
LEBOR feasa RÚNDA



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Lore and Magic





The Song of Amergin

the
LeBOR feasa Runda
(Book of seceret knowledge)

A Druidic Grammar of
Celtic Lore and Magic

translated from the
Black Book of Loughcrew

by
Steven L. Akins

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This book is lovingly dedicated to my children
Alexander and Morgan Akins

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preface

The following text, which I have here translated for the first time in English, was initially brought to my attention through a very interesting conversation I had a number of years ago with a gentleman named John Paterson who, by an unusual set of circumstances, came to be aware of its existence as a young man while living near Glasgow, Scotland, during the Second World War. Mr. Paterson told me that he had briefly caught a glimpse of the book as it was being confiscated from Rudolf Hess, a high-ranking Nazi official who was taken into custody shortly after he parachuted from his unarmed plane after running low on fuel over Renfrewshire, Scotland, around 11 p.m. on the night of May 10, 1941.

Touching down at Floors Farm near Eaglesham, south of Glasgow and some ten miles from his intended destination of Dungavel House, the country estate of the Duke of Hamilton and Brandon, Hess had injured his ankle on impact and was quickly apprehended by David McLean, a local farmer armed with a pitchfork. McLean had seen the Messerschmitt Bf 110 go down and took its only occupant by surprise while he was struggling to disengage his parachute harness. Hess insisted that he had come to Scotland in an effort to negotiate a peace treaty between Germany and Great Britain with the Duke of Hamilton, who he believed to be an opponent of Britain's Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, the man Hess held responsible for the outbreak of the war.

Hess proposed that the war between Germany and Britain could be brought to a halt and that all the Western European countries defeated by Germany would be turned over to their own national governments subject to German supervision. Germany would have been responsible for the cost

of rebuilding those countries in return for Britain's support of the impending invasion Hitler was about to launch against Soviet Russia.

Mr. Paterson, who was present at the time Hess was detained, was of the impression that the ancient text, which was taken from Hess shortly thereafter, was intended as a gift of goodwill to the Duke. It had the appearance of being a very old Gaelic manuscript containing, among other things, a variety of charms and incantations. It was not until several months later that I would discover what the book actually was and how it had come into Hess' possession.

By fortunate coincidence I later met the widow of the late Mr. Henry Thorenson who kindly provided me with a copy of her husband's German transcription of the volume Rudolf Hess had brought with him to Scotland as an intended gift to the Duke of Hamilton. Mr. Thorenson, an expert on linguistics, was among a team of scholars assigned by the Ahnenerbe Forschungs-und Lehrgemeinschaft to translate this ancient Gaelic text into German in the late 1930's, by orders from Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler. Thorenson, who served as a German officer during World War II, had been captured by Allied forces in 1943 and was brought to the United States as a prisoner of war. In the years following the end of the war Thorenson was released from custody and continued to live in the United States, having married an American girl and settled down to live a modest life as a school teacher.

In the decades which followed, Thorenson went on to complete his German translation of the early Irish manuscript known as the *Lebor Feasa Rúnda* (Book of Secret Knowledge), and actively sought to be of assistance in efforts to negotiate Rudolf Hess' release from Spandau prison following the parole of Albert Speer and Baldur von Schirach in 1966. Thorenson died in 1991, never having published his German translation. The text of the *Lebor Feasa Rúnda* might otherwise have remained in complete obscurity had it not been for the willingness of Evelyn Thorenson, Henry's widow, to allow me to use her late husband's work as the basis for my present English translation.

The remarkable history which surrounds this text was outlined by Thorenson's own copious notes which detail how the *Lebor Feasa Rúnda* had passed from one owner to the next over the centuries. How much of this account is truth and how much may well be conjecture I am not prepared to say more than that my own extensive research into the events surrounding its discovery, and knowledge of Celtic culture and traditions, inclines me to believe that it has a solid foundation of truth.

Attributed to the 8th century B.C. Irish king Ollamh Fodhla who (being the recipient of a vast dispensation of esoteric knowledge through a messenger of the ancient Celtic pagan deities) recorded the teachings that had been

imparted to him in ogham text on a set of wooden tablets which he later instructed his son, Caibre, to inter alongside his body at the time of his death. These same ogham tablets were later supposedly discovered and translated in the 3rd century A.D. by the Druid Mogh Ruith as the *Lebor Feasa Rúnda*, a text which had been preserved in manuscript form, carefully transcribed along with other scriptures by monks of the early Christian Church in Ireland, as a treatise on the magical arts known as the *Black Book of Loughcrew*.

Early on, the *Book of Loughcrew* was apparently among the texts brought to England by Hiberno-Scottish missionaries from Ireland when they re-established a monastery amid the ruins of Glastonbury abbey. By the first half of the 10th century A.D. the book had evidently come into the possession Dunstan, abbot of Glastonbury, who was later appointed Archbishop of Canterbury and was formally canonized as a saint in 1029 A.D; despite the fact that earlier in his career he had been expelled from the court of King Athelstan as a practitioner of sorcery and black magic.

In the decades that followed the text of the *Lebor Feasa Rúnda* may have circulated among the Knights Templars who could have easily adapted its rituals under the guise of a pseudo-biblical attribution to conceal its pagan origin, perhaps inspiring medieval works on magic such as the *Key of Solomon*. Legends alluding to the Templars' quest for relics such as the Holy Grail hint at parallels drawn from Celtic mythology in which sacred vessels possessing miraculous attributes feature prominently. Among the allegations brought against the Templars that led to the destruction of their order in the early 1300's were accusations of their involvement with occult rites and the practice of magic; although rumors suggest that a surviving band of Templars, led by William Sinclair, escaped persecution by fleeing to Scotland. There, under the protection of the excommunicated King Robert the Bruce, their order is said to have continued in secrecy; supposedly leading to the formation of the fraternal order of Freemasons.

By the 13th century A.D. the *Black Book of Loughcrew* had purportedly fallen into the hands of Michael Scott, a famed Scottish occultist whose reputation as a sorcerer had earned him the nickname of "the Wizard of the North." Scott, who was born in 1175 A.D., had studied at Durham and Oxford before going abroad to further his education in Paris, where he studied theology and was eventually ordained as a priest. Pope Honorius III (said to be practitioner of the dark arts and attributed as the author of more than one book on black magic) had written to Cardinal Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1224 for the purpose of obtaining an English benefice for Scott, but he declined that appointment choosing instead to

travel to Bologna, Italy, and later to Toledo, Spain, in order to continue his studies.

Following Scott's death in 1232, the book containing the only surviving copy of the *Lebor Feasa Rúnda* was evidently acquired by the Franciscan Friar, Roger Bacon, whose scholarly interest in the occult accounts for the authorship of at least one medieval textbook on magic, *De Nigromancia*, being attributed to him. With Bacon's death in 1294 the Black Book of Loughcrew changed hands several times, allegedly finding its way into the possession of such noteworthy personages as Henry Cornelius Agrippa and Georg Sabel (alias Johannes Faustus) before ending up in the library of a practicing physician and Catholic priest named Sir Robert of Drayton in Somerset, England.

Sir Robert apparently bequeathed the book to his former apprentice, John Walsh of Dorset, who was arrested in 1565 and examined the following year on charges of sorcery and witchcraft. The book was confiscated by the arresting constable, Robert Baker of Crewkerne, and eventually found its way into the possession of one John Husey of Blokley who later passed it on to a certain acquaintance of his by the name of Edward Talbot (alias Edward Kelly). From there the book fell into the hands of the famed Elizabethan magus, Dr. John Dee, who employed Kelly as a crystal-gazer and medium. Dee's experiments with the occult seem to have been partly influenced by its teachings.

It is unclear beyond this point as to what became of the book, as Dee and Kelly went abroad to Europe for several years seeking the patronage of continental nobility, but in 1589 Dee went back to England leaving Kelly behind. When Dee returned to his estate at Mortlake after an absence of six years he found that his considerable library had been ransacked and many of his rare books and instruments had been stolen.

Kelly, who had taken up residence in the Bohemian town of Trebon, remained in Central Europe under the patronage of Count Vilem Rozmberk, who supported Kelly's alchemical experiments. Achieving considerable notoriety, Kelly was even honored by Emperor Rudolph II, who granted him the title of "Baron of the Kingdom," but Kelly's rise to eminence was short-lived and he was arrested and imprisoned on more than one occasion due to his failed experiments in creating gold. Kelly died in 1597 at the age of forty-two, allegedly succumbing to injuries received while attempting to escape from a tower in which Rudolph held him prisoner.

The manuscript containing the *Lebor Feasa Rúnda* eventually resurfaced for a brief time in the 18th century when it was said to have circulated as a literary curiosity among such notable personages as Giuseppe Balsamo (a.k.a. Count Alessandro di Cagliostro), Adam Weishaupt, founder of the Bavarian

Illumanati, and Sir Francis Dashwood, a friend of Weishaupt's and organizer of London's infamous Hellfire Club.

At some point in the late 19th century, the Black Book of Loughcrew passed between the hands of Austrian mystic Guido von List, and Carl Kneller, a wealthy German industrialist and Freemason who, together with Theodor Reuss, went on to found a secret society known as the Ordo Templi Orientis, or O.T.O., prior to his death in 1905. From that point the book came into the possession of Rudolf von Sebottendorff, a member of the List-inspired secret society known as the Germanenorden, who in collaboration with Walter Nauhaus founded an occult study group called the Thule Gesellschaft. The disciples of this völkisch esoteric organization saw evidence for an Atlantean origin of the Aryan race in the lore contained within the Lebor Feasa Rúnda, specifically in the legends relating to the ancient gods of the pagan Celts having come from a mysterious island in the North Atlantic, bringing with them the four hallowed treasures of the Tuatha Dé Danann.

The fact that the Lebor Feasa Rúnda apparently corroborated the Thule doctrine of Aryan racial origins led to Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler ordering its seizure by the S.S. following Adolf Hitler's rise to power. Nazi ideology sought to equate the legendary Celtic treasures with long-lost relics of antiquity such as the Holy Grail, the Spear of Destiny and the Stone of Scone, all of which were earmarked by Himmler for an official scavenger hunt carried out by the S.S. The ancient manuscript even inspired neo-pagan Nazi rituals such as the one in which a huge Celtic-style cauldron fashioned from 24 pounds of solid gold was cast into the Bavarian lake of Chiemsee as a votive offering during a ceremony performed to secure Nazi victory through propitiating the ancestral gods.

The fabled Black Book of Loughcrew was inexplicably returned to Britain by Rudolf Hess under mysterious circumstances on May 10, 1941, eventually ending up in the hands of the Occult Division of Britain's MI5 Intelligence Service. Hess, a long-time member of the Thule Gesellschaft, had flown to Scotland and parachuted from his plane ostensibly under the pretext of meeting the Duke of Hamilton and Brandon with the intention of negotiating a secret peace treaty that would insure German dominance in Europe and a reinforcement of the British Empire among its commonwealth states.

This escapade occurred not long after a covert military assignment code-named "Operation Mistletoe" is said to have been carried out within the ranks of British Intelligence in 1940. This plot allegedly involved mysterious occult rituals taking place at Ashdown Forest in Sussex, England; purportedly attended by such notable figures as Ian Fleming and Aleister Crowley (who by 1923 had succeeded Theodor Reuss as head of the Ordo Templi Orientis).

Interestingly, two German S.S. officers designated as “Kestral” and “Sea Eagle” were also supposedly present at these ceremonies. Whatever the case may be, the book that Rudolf Hess brought with him to Scotland has remained in the hands of the British government ever since.

Hess was taken into custody shortly after his descent into Scotland and briefly detained at Maryhill Barracks in Glasgow before being transferred to Buchanan Castle near Drymen. From there he was sent by rail to England, at the insistence of Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who rejected Hess’ peace negotiations and had him placed in the Tower of London from May 17 – 21, 1941; the last prisoner ever held there. Hess spent the next thirteen months under close guard at Mytchett Place, Camp Z, near Aldershot in Surrey, England; while there he reportedly attempted suicide by throwing himself off a balcony on June 15, 1941. On June 26, 1942, Hess was sent to Maindiff Court Hospital near Aberavenny, Wales, where he was confined for the remainder of the war.

Among the individuals brought in to interrogate him was naval intelligence officer Ian Fleming who suggested that noted occultist Aleister Crowley be allowed to interview Hess regarding the more esoteric aspects of his mission. The higher ranking officials in charge of the case would not permit it however. Crowley’s peripheral involvement with the Hess incident does open the doors to some interesting questions regarding the authenticity of the *Lebor Feasa Rúnda* and has led to speculation that the British government may have secretly commissioned its forgery by Crowley, who was well known as a translator of occult manuscripts. It is certain that the British Intelligence Service considered hiring a number of astrologers to fabricate horoscopes to be passed along to Nazi officials for the purpose of influencing their timing of certain military maneuvers so as to be better anticipated by the Allies in their conflict with the Axis forces.

Many of the passages found in the *Lebor Feasa Rúnda* bear a striking similarity to a number of traditional, centuries old, Gaelic spells and incantations that were collected from the rural inhabitants of the Scottish Highlands and published by the folklorist Alexander Carmichael in his *Carmina Gadelica*, a work comprising six volumes, the first two being released in the year 1900. This was not long after Aleister Crowley had purchased Boleskine House on the southeastern shore of Loch Ness, located about a mile north of the village of Foyers, Scotland. Crowley had taken up residence in the secluded 18th century lodge in 1899 for the purpose of concentrating on his occult studies in undisturbed solitude. If any meeting between Carmichael and Crowley ever occurred, there is no known record which mentions it. Carmichael died in 1912, and the remaining four volumes of the *Carmina Gadelica* were published posthumously. Volumes III & IV

were edited by his grandson, James Carmichael Watson, and published in 1940 and 1941. The final two volumes being edited by Angus Matheson and were not published until 1954 and 1971.

In any case, within a few days of Hess' arrival in Scotland, Hitler's Riech Minister, Joseph Goebbels, issued "an order against occultism, clairvoyancy, etc." on May 15, 1941, writing in his diary, "This obscure rubbish will now be eliminated once and for all. The miracle men, Hess' darlings, will now be put under lock and key."

Interestingly, Winston Churchill, the main proponent for Britain continuing the war against Germany, was himself a member of more than one esoteric fraternity, having been initiated to the Freemasons in the degree of Entered Apprentice at London's Studholme Lodge in 1901. He later advanced through the Fellow Craft degree to the rank of Master Mason in March 1902 at Rosemary Lodge. By August 1908 Churchill had been initiated in the Albion Lodge of the Ancient Order of Druids in a ceremony which took place at Blenheim Palace, his family estate.

According to physicians assigned to evaluate his mental condition Hess reportedly stated that his flight came about as the result of having received spiritual messages from the gods revealing that he was the "chosen one" ordained to bring about a new era of world peace. Diagnosed as being mentally unstable, having a psychopathic personality, and suffering from hysterical amnesia, Hess was spared the death penalty in his post-war trial at Nuremberg, receiving a life sentence and confined at Spandau Prison. There he would remain for the next 41 years until his death in 1987 at the age of ninety-three, the prison's sole inmate.

The contents of the Black Book of Loughcrew were photographed by the S.S. in the years prior to its return and placed on microfilm which was later recovered by U.S. troops in the summer of 1945 following the fall of the Third Reich. This microfilm copy was turned over to the U.S. Office of Strategic Services and is presumed to currently be in the possession of the Central Intelligence Agency. The materials confiscated from Hess by British military intelligence shortly after his arrival in Scotland in May 1941 were kept in a sealed file which was supposed to remain unopened until 2017, but when the seal was broken in 1991-92, it was found that the contents of the file had already been removed and were missing. Given the seemingly incredible history of this single volume of Celtic mystical literature, it is remarkable that it survived at all.

The Lebor Feasa Rúnda, or "Book of Secret Knowledge," may be counted among a very select group of religious documents which claim to have been divinely revealed to humanity through supernatural means. Never intended for general circulation, this rarely seen scripture is an exposition of the Druidic

faith, long held in secret and never before published in its entirety, although fragments of its text have appeared in numerous other manuscripts over the centuries in varying degrees of similarity to the versions presented herein. The history, legends, myths, religious doctrine, philosophical concepts, and magical teachings contained in this work represent the most comprehensive and authentic collection of ancient Celtic beliefs and practices known to date.

At face value, the *Lebor Feasa Rúnda*, fulfills the same role in pagan Celtic spirituality as the Bible, the Torah, or the Koran do in the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic religions. Yet it is far more than just the sacred text of a people, for it offers a unique and in-depth look at the intricate and highly developed culture to which they belonged. To the historian it represents a fascinating chronicle of events which have parallels echoed in the historical accounts of many other societies the world over. To the occultist it will be recognized as a grimoire in the tradition of the medieval textbooks of magic that provided instruction on summoning and harnessing the powers of spiritual entities.

Here the esoteric doctrines of the Druids are explained, and the creation myth of the Celts is revealed alongside details of their origins and accounts of their epic struggles in both the natural and supernatural worlds. That so much of the lore found in this volume continued to survive in other manuscripts, as well as unwritten accounts handed down as oral tradition over the centuries, says much for the tenacity and deeply rooted consciousness of the Celtic psyche. This is particularly true when one considers the tremendous opposition mounted by those seeking to replace the native beliefs of the Celts with those of Christianity.

More often than not, the attempts to eradicate the pagan ways proved futile, and the foreign teachings that sought to supplant them tended instead to graft themselves onto the existing beliefs, incorporating them into a synthesis of the two creeds. Aspects of this spiritual and cultural compromise can still clearly be seen to this day by the inclusion of the ancient Celtic festivals in the Church calendar, as well as the adoption of pagan deities as Christian saints, most notably the goddess Brighid; or by the demonization of the ancient gods as in the case of Cerna or Cernunnos, whose horned visage inspired later depictions of the Christian devil.

Regardless of whatever co-mingling between the faiths having occurred in the centuries following the Christianizing of the Celts, here for the first time is the full account of their spiritual belief system as it existed originally in its pure and unadulterated form, which is now revealed as the Way of the Sidhe.

Steven L. Akins

Introduction

During the early Middle Ages a number of attempts were made by monastic scholars in the Celtic community to record the history and legends that had previously been preserved only by the bards and seannachies who committed to memory the folk tales and genealogies that they were called upon to orally recount before their listeners. The literature preserved through the efforts of these clerics resulted in a number of manuscripts, of which the *Lebor Gábala Érenn* (found in both the Book of Fermoy and the Book of Leinster) is perhaps the most well known example.

Due in part to past reliance upon memory alone, unaided by written accounts, as well as the tendency of Christian scholars to downplay the pagan overtones of the material that they were transcribing in an effort to make it fit more neatly alongside the Biblical history which they sought to supplement, discrepancies naturally occurred when the stories were eventually recorded by monastic scribes many centuries after their initial conception. Relationships between the numerous figures in these tales, and in some cases their names themselves, may have become confused or forgotten altogether.

An example of this is found where the name of the Gaelic mother-goddess is concerned. The gods of the Irish mythological cycle are known collectively as the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, a title which scholars normally translate as meaning the “Tribe of [the goddess] Danu.” The name Danu, however, is actually a modern-day hypothetical reconstruction based upon inferences which suggest that it may have been one of the original forms of the goddess’

name, despite the fact that it has never been found rendered as such in any of the original sources of existing Celtic literature.

The names of the goddess that do appear recorded in the medieval manuscripts range from Danand, Danann, Dinand, Dianann, Donann, Ana, Anand, Anann, Anu, Aine, Boand, Boann, and Boind, all of which most likely referred to what was originally a single entity, though in the accounts where these names are given they sometimes appear to refer to different characters. However, in the context of their association with two other prominent Celtic goddesses, Brighid and the Morrigan, it is apparent that all of them represent what was anciently conceived as a trinity of the divine feminine aspects of maiden, mother and crone which came to be personified as Brighid, Danand and Morrigan.

The Morrigan was herself represented as a triune deity in the form of Badb, Nemain and Macha, who were associated with war, death, and dark prophetic wisdom, assuming the form of three carrion crows or ravens. This symbolism of the goddess of death in bird form seems to be consistent throughout Celtic culture and may be paralleled in the Welsh legend of Blodeuwedd, the wife of Lleu Llaw Gyffes who was transformed into an owl for committing adultery, and also in the archaeological discoveries of artifacts depicting scenes of the Gaulish pagan deity Esus cutting down a tree in which is hidden a bull with three cranes, identified as *Tauros Trigaranus*.

The bull, which is often shown in ancient representations alongside the stag-antlered god Cernunnos, may represent the Celtic horned-god in his aspect as a guardian of the dead and protector of the underworld, a role hinted at in the Irish myths where the name Donn, meaning “dark one” is given to characters in several different stories, including the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, or “Cattle Raid of Cooley”, in which Donn is the name of an enchanted brown bull who has undergone a series of mystical incarnations and conflicts together with his nemesis, Finnbhennach, the white-horned bull of Connacht; a tale in which the Morrigan appears as a prominent character.

The story of the conflict between the dark bull of Cooley and the white-horned bull of Connacht alludes to a theme of seasonal cycles in which light and darkness are involved in an eternal struggle, much like that of the Oak King and the Holly King in the Mummer plays of British folk drama. These pageants being a survival of pagan May-Day festivals celebrating nature’s springtime renewal personified by the Green Man, a symbolic entity that evolved from the concept of the horned god as a sylvan deity associated with forests and woodlands.

As a guardian of the dead, the Celtic horned god was also credited as being the ancestor of the human race. Julius Caesar speaks of this in the chronicle of his campaigns during the Roman conquest of Gaul and Britain

in The Gallic Wars, where he refers to the Celtic deity using the name of his Latin counterpart, Dis Pater, saying, "All Gauls claim that they are descended from Dis Pater, and assert that this tradition has been handed down by the Druids. For this reason they calculate the divisions of every season, not by the number of days, but by nights, they observe birthdays and the beginnings of months and years in such an order that the day follows the night."

This peculiarity of the Celtic form of reckoning seems to have been preserved among the Gaelic people, who began and ended their calendar year with the festival of Samhain, which was observed on the eve of November, and later gave rise to the traditional folk festival of Halloween. Samhain was considered to be a particularly supernatural time when the gateway between the mortal and immortal realms was opened and spirits of the deceased were free to move among the living. This day was especially associated with the Celtic horned god, a fact which seems to be reflected in one of the names given to him in the Irish mythological cycle where he appears briefly as Samhainn, a brother of Cian and Goibniu, who was charged with guarding Cian's enchanted cow in a story relating the events preceding the birth of Lugh Lamhfada which led to the second battle of Mag Tuiredh.

While the horned god of the Celts has been identified as Cernunnos on inscriptions from artifacts found in Gaul, this name does not occur in either Gaelic or Welsh mythological literature. A variant form of the name is briefly encountered in the legend of the Irish king Conaire Mor who was told "thou shall not hunt the wild beasts of Cerna" as part of a list of acts that were forbidden to him by an envoy of the gods. Likewise in Britain the names of Cerne and Herne echo as a half-remembered reference to this ancient pagan deity. In Wales the name of Cerna or Cernunnos may have evolved into that of Gronwy, the mysterious hunter with whom Blodeuwedd betrays her husband, Lleu Llaw Gyffes. Lleu being the Welsh counterpart of the god Lugus, worshipped by the Celts of Gaul, and the Irish deity Lugh Lamhfada, who was acknowledged as being a master of every skill.

The harvest festival of Lughnasadh, held on the eve of August, was said to have been inaugurated by Lugh himself in remembrance of his foster-mother Tailtiu who died of exhaustion after clearing the plain of Mag Breg in Meath. Lugh's association as a god of the harvest is further emphasized in an episode from the second battle of Mag Tuiredh when he demands knowledge of agriculture from the defeated traitor-king Bres in exchange for sparing his life. Much later, the memory of Lugh would survive in the personification of the folk-character John Barleycorn, celebrated as a deification of the harvested grain and the spirits distilled from it.

Other significant festivals observed by the Celts included Imbolc, held on the eve of February, and Beltane which took place on May eve. The name

Imbolc is an Irish word meaning “in the belly” and signifies the beginning of the lactation season for ewes, marking the arrival of spring. This day was considered sacred to Brighid, the ancient goddess of fertility whose name is found throughout Celtic culture variously rendered as Brigando, Brigantia, and later as the Christian St. Brigid. So well-loved was this deity that she survived all attempts to exterminate the last vestiges of paganism in the British Isles, eventually being conferred the status of a saint, whose holy day took the place of the earlier Celtic festival.

Beltane, a word meaning “the fire of Bel” in the Gaelic language, was the name given to the festival which marked the beginning of summer and the bright half of the year. Held on the first of May, Beltane was celebrated with bonfires and other festivities linked with fertility in honor of Bel, the sun god of the ancient Celts, who was worshipped as Belenos in Gaul and as Beli Mawr by the Welsh.

The calendar used by the ancient Celts appears to have been based upon both the lunar and the solar year. While the solar year consists of 365 days, a calendar based upon 13 months, each being four weeks or 28 days long, results in a lunar year of 364 days, to which an extra day would be added, making a total of 365 days. The extra day fell upon Samhain, which was considered to be the time when the old year ended and the new year began, giving rise to the expression “a year and a day,” frequently encountered in Celtic literature. This thirteen month calendar would have more easily accommodated the true zodiac consisting of the thirteen constellations through which the sun passes during the year and includes the constellation of Serpentarius or Ophiuchus, the serpent-holder, which was excluded from the zodiac by the Romans who favored a twelve month solar year.

Interestingly, this often ignored thirteenth sign of the zodiac, which falls between the constellations of Scorpio and Sagittarius and lies in the path of the sun from November 30 to December 17, is represented as a man holding a snake, which is a feature common to depictions of the Celtic horned god who is frequently illustrated as holding a serpent in his left hand in archaeological examples such as are found on the first century B.C. Celtic ritual cauldron discovered in Gundestrup, Denmark, as well as on rock carvings from Val Comonica in northern Italy which have been dated to 400 B.C.

The Celtic concept of the afterlife seems to have been similar to that of most other pagan cultures in Europe. Those who died valiantly on the field of glory received a hero's welcome to the land of the gods, while those fated to succumb to an ignoble death through sickness or old age might retire to the shadowy abyss of the underworld known as Tech Duinn, or the “House of Donn,” to find rest before being reborn through a new incarnation.

The elysium of the Celtic gods was to be found on an island far to the west, beyond the setting sun, which was immortalized through many names, although Tir nan'Og or the "Land of Youth" seems to have been its original name; while Emain Abhlach or the "Isle of Apples" was another of its appellations, connecting it with Avalon in the Arthurian legends of later centuries. Like the lost continent of Atlantis, it seems to have sunk beneath the ocean, as it later came to be called Tir fo Thonn, the "Land Beneath the Waves," and was ruled over by the ancient Celtic sea-god, Manannan mac Lir, long after the other gods of the Tuatha Dé Danann had forsaken it in favor of Ireland. As Tir Tairngire, the "Land of Promise," it remained as a hoped-for destination that awaited those fortunate enough to visit its shores by leaving the mortal world behind.

When the iron-age Celts finally did arrive in Ireland around 500 B.C. they found a land that was filled with mysterious chamber tombs and megalithic monuments built by the former inhabitants during the Neolithic era and Bronze Age. The presence of these structures doubtlessly inspired the Celts' belief that not only had the land once been populated by their gods, but that they continued to occupy the brugs and mounds in the surrounding landscape, giving rise to the habit of referring to the Tuatha Dé Danann as the Daoine Sídh or "People of the Hills," so that ultimately the word Sídh was employed as a term for the gods themselves.

By the time Christianity reached Ireland in the fifth century A.D., the Druidic religion of the Gael already had a thousand year foothold on the people of that land, and the gods of the old religion would not soon be forgotten. While the new religion was rapidly and widely accepted, the old days and ways were never completely abandoned and lived on in the memories, legends, customs and beliefs of the people who first breathed life into them, the proud and ancient race of the noble Celts.

the testament of ollamh fodhla

Hear now the words of Eochaidh Ollamh Fodhla, the High King of Ireland, who spake unto his son, Cairbre, saying, “Value, O my son Cairbre, the wisdom of my words, seeing that I, Eochaidh, have received this from the Áes Sídhhe.”

Then answered Cairbre, saying, “How hath it come to pass that I deserve to follow the way of my father Eochaidh in such things, who hast been found worthy to receive the knowledge of all great mysteries through the teaching of the Áes Sídhhe?”

And Ollamh Fodhla said, “Hear, O my son, and receive my words, and learn the wonders of the Áes Sídhhe. For on a certain night, when I stood upon the Hill of Tara overlooking my kingdom, I heard a voice carried upon the wind which spake my name and I puzzled over this and asked who called unto me. Then did there appear before me a messenger of the Áes Sídhhe, even Nemglan, who spoke many things graciously unto me, and said, ‘Listen, O Eochaidh! For long hast thou ruled justly over Ireland and great is thy knowledge and learning, and deep is thy wisdom, so that it hath been ordained that I have been sent forth from Tir Tairngire to complete thy understanding of all things seen and unseen that are yet unknown to the mortal race of men.’

“And when I heard the words which were spoken unto me, I perceived that in me had the knowledge of all things, of both the mortal and immortal realms, been imparted; and I saw that all the teachings and learning of this present age were astray, and that no man was without flaw.

Thenceforth I inscribed in ogham characters upon staves of yew wood a certain record in which I have revealed the secret of secrets, and in which I have vouchsafed them hidden, and I have also therein related all history of the origins of our race and all knowledge of the immortal gods and of their dealings with mankind, and explained all wonders whatsoever of the magical arts of every adept; along with all marvels or undertakings, namely, of those mysteries which are in any wise worthy of being achieved. These things and more I have concealed upon these staves so that as a key openeth a locked door, so this testament alone may open the knowledge and understanding of all the sacred mysteries.

“Wherefore, O my son, thou mayest know all rites and rituals of every ceremony for calling upon and having dealings with the immortal gods, and through the conjuration of them by means of sacred proceedings as thou shalt see rightly set down by me, thou mayest work wonders through mastering the power of this knowledge, which I have set forth; even the ways of divination whereby all things which are in the Universe, and which have been in days long past, and which are yet to come to pass in future ages, may be revealed.

“Therefore, O my son Cairbre, I command thee by the benediction which thou expecteth from thy father, that thou shalt fashion a vault of stone, and therein place, conceal, and secure this my testament; and when I shall have passed away unto my fathers, I beseech thee to place the same in my tomb beside me, lest in another age it might fall into the hands of the profane.” And as Ollamh Fodhla commanded, so was it done.

And when, thereafter many generations had passed, there was held every third year on Samhain a Feis at Tara to which all the noblemen and scholars of Ireland did gather, and there came to Loughcrew unto the tomb of Ollamh Fodhla certain Druids; and when they had assembled they at once took counsel together that a certain number of men should restore the grave in Ollamh Fodhla’s honor; and when the tomb was uncovered to be restored, the vault of stone was discovered, and therein were the ogham staves, which they beheld with joyous hearts, and when they looked upon them none among them could discern their message by reason of the obscurity of the words and their arcane arrangement, and the occult essence of the meaning and knowledge contained therein, for they were not deserving to possess this treasure.

Thereupon, arose among the Druids, one more righteous than the others, both in the sight of the gods, and by reason of his age, who was called

Mogh Ruith, and said unto the others, “Unless we shall go forth and ask the interpretation of this testament from the gods with piety and humility, we shall never discern the meaning of it.”

Therefore, when each of the Druids had retired to his abode, Mogh Ruith indeed fell upon his knees to the ground in great consternation and said, “What have I deserved above others, seeing that so many men can neither understand nor interpret this knowledge, even though there be no secret thing in nature which the gods hath hidden from me! Wherefore are these words so inscrutable? Wherefore am I so ignorant?”

And then on his bended knees, turning his eyes to the heavens, he said, “O gods, who are the creators of all, thou who knowest all things, who gavest such great wisdom unto Ollamh Fodhla the king of Ireland; grant unto me, I beseech thee, O mysterious, powerful and wondrous Sídhé, to receive the virtue of that wisdom, so that I may become worthy by thine aid to discern the understanding of these staves of mystery.”

And immediately there appeared unto him, a messenger of the Áes Sídhé, saying, “Dost thou remember that if the secrets of Ollamh Fodhla appear arcane and obscure unto thee, that the gods hath wished it so that such wisdom may not fall into the hands of profane men; wherefore dost thou promise unto me, that thou art not willing that such great knowledge should ever come to any living creature, and that which thou revealest unto any let them know that they must keep it unto themselves, otherwise the sanctity is defiled and no effect can follow?”

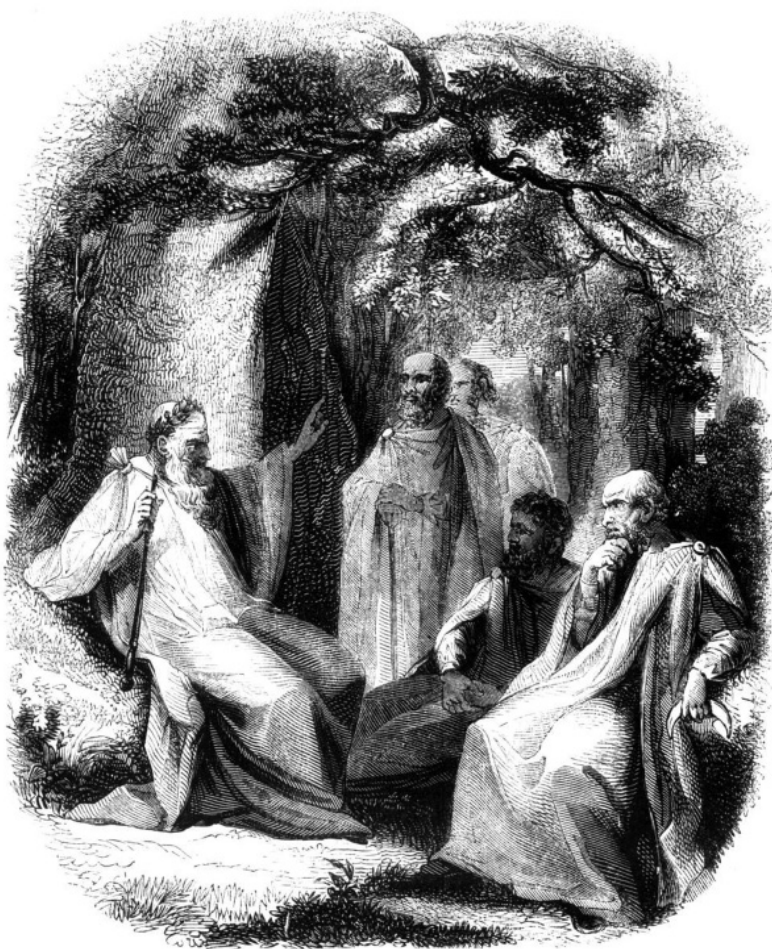
And Mogh Ruith answered, “I vow unto thee that to none shall I reveal them, save to the honor of the gods, and with much discipline, unto discerning, erudite, and righteous persons.” Then answered the messenger; “Go forth and read the testament, and its words which were obscure throughout shall be made manifest unto thee.” And after this the messenger returned to the realm of Siabra in a peal of thunder.

Then Mogh Ruith was glad, and laboring with a clear mind, understood that which the messenger of the Áes Sídhé had said, and he saw that the testament of Ollamh Fodhla was changed, so that it became discernable unto him and made apparent in all parts. And Mogh Ruith understood that this work might fall into the hands of the ignorant, and he said, “I conjure him into whose hands this secret may come, by the power of the gods, and their wisdom, that in all things they may desire, intend and perform, that this treasure may come unto no unworthy person, nor may they manifest it unto

any who is unwise, nor unto one who regardeth not the gods; for if they act otherwise, I decree that they may never be worthy to attain unto the desired effect.”

And so he deposited the ogham staves, which Ollamh Fodhla preserved, in the vault of stone. But the words of the testament are as follows, hereafter written.

part One



chapter one

of tír nan'og and the áes sídhe

Long ago, before the dawn of the ages, there was naught but the depths of a vast emptiness which was the goddess Domnann, who existed from the beginning of time, dwelling alone without companionship until at last there came forth from out of the shadows of her darkness, Net, the god of disruption. And through the power of his will Net did cause the stillness of Domnann's void to be disturbed so that the darkness became divided and matter and form took shape where before there was only space and emptiness. And into this void was born Ernmas, the goddess of the earth, and Tuireann the god of the sky. And Ernmas did lie beneath Tuireann so that she was covered by him and from their union was born Bel, the god of the sun, and Danand, the goddess of the moon.

And the brightness of the sun shone upon the earth during the day and the light of the moon by night. Great was the warmth and brilliance of Bel, which caused Danand to be filled with desire and longing for him, so that she was wont to follow after him as he traversed the heavens. Through her wiles she did seduce him and they became lovers. From their union was born the race of gods who are called the Áes Sídh, and who were known of old as the Tuatha Dé Danann, or People of Danand.

Many were the number of the Tuatha Dé Danann, and among them were Lir, lord of the depths of the oceans; and Manannan his son, ruler of the waves of the seas; and Dagda the good, who is a generous helper unto all; and his daughter, Brighid the maiden, protectress of growing things; and Diancécht the healer, physician of the gods; and Goibniu the smith, master of the forge and metalwork; and Oghma the eloquent, greatest of all bards and scholars; and Nuada, the warrior of the gods and defender of their race; and Midhir, guardian of the treasures that lie buried deep beneath the earth. These and many more numbered among the Tuatha Dé Danann.

Yet the Tuatha Dé Danann were not the only children who were born to the generation of Net and Domnann, for there existed an elder race of beings called the Fomoraig who likewise came forth from their union. Great was their size and strength, having bodies like unto that of a man but with the heads of goats; while others of them had but a single leg, with only one arm and one eye each. So wicked and malevolent were these monstrous creatures that Tuireann could not bear to look upon them, and he ordained that they should be cast into the sea. But the sea did not consume them, and the Fomoraig took to living amidst the waters of the ocean, and they did travel upon its waves. And in the cold, dark, northern lands of the earth they made their kingdom, far from Tuireann's gaze.

And so the Fomoraig being banished from the fellowship of the Tuatha Dé Danann came to dwell in Lochlann, on account of their great cruelty and ruthlessness; all save but one named Samthainn, who in his youth was beloved by all the gods for his playful nature, as he delighted them with his mirth and merriment. In time he grew to a handsome form, but for the antlers that grew forth from his head, so that he was called Cerna, meaning 'the Horned One,' by all the Tuatha Dé Danann. And he was given charge of watching over their flocks in the fields and the herds of animals that dwelt in the forests of their country which was called Tir nan'Og.

Now Tir nan'Og was an island that lay far out to sea, beyond the north winds, in the midst of the great ocean; and it was the fairest of all places in the world. In the heart of that isle spread a vast plain called Mag Mell. Broad and green were its fields and meadows, where grew countless groves of apple trees upon whose silver branches were borne golden fruits; so that it was sometimes called Emhain Abhlach, the Isle of Apples.

Upon this fair plain stood the Tobar Segais, or Well of Knowledge, from which five streams did flow. There five salmon did swim who fed upon the nuts of nine hazel trees that grew about the well. Fine was the weather there, and age came not to those who dwelt in that land, but all who lived there did remain young and strong and beautiful.

And those who did dwell there had built four magnificent cities; Fálías to the north, Gorias to the east, Findias to the south, and Murias to the west. In each of these four cities there stood a watchtower overlooking the land of Tir nan'Og wherein four great masters of knowledge and learning, skilled in the arts of enchantment and magic held forth; Morfesa of Fálías, Esras of Gorias, Uiscias of Findias, and Semias of Murias. They were the guardians of four great treasures, and were the teachers of the Áes Sídhé from whom they learned great wisdom and skills.

And it happened that one day Brighid, the daughter of Dagda, was alone having wandered into the wilderness, for she was fond of all manner of herbs and green things and had great knowledge of their powers and uses. And in her wandering she ventured into the realm of Cerna who dwelt deep in the forests and was master of all the animals who lived there; for he more than any of the other gods was the most wild and feral among them.

Now Cerna had never seen such a fair and beautiful maiden as Brighid, and no sooner had he caught but a glimpse of her was he smitten with a deep longing to have her. But frightened was she of his strange appearance, for he was arrayed in rustic apparel wearing garments of green oak leaves and having antlers upon his head, so that she fled from his company. Yet did Cerna pursue her until she relented and the two became lovers, and from their union was born the race of man.

This did not bode well for Brighid for she was much beloved by Tuireann, and when he discovered her tryst with Cerna he set about to punish them. Taking a blade forged by Goibniu, Tuireann gave it unto Brian, and told him to go forth to the realm of Cerna and lay waste to it, so that the race of man could no longer look only to their father, the horned one, to aid them in seeking their livelihood by hunting and herding the beasts which he ruled, but that they should thereafter have to seek out the other gods of the Tuatha Dé Danann to assist them in their toils and labors in raising crops by the sweat of their brows.

And because mankind had been conceived from the tryst of Brighid with the Horned One, Tuireann decreed that the race of man should not bide in the land of Tir nan'Og, but that they must forever dwell in the mortal lands of the earth. And for this reason their life there would not be unending, but that they should be mortal, wherefore age and death would come to them. Then did he cause a veil of mist to fall about Tir nan'Og so that it disappeared and could not be found by those who did dwell in the mortal world.

And after this was accomplished, Tuireann banished Cerna from the land of Tir nan'Og and sent him thenceforth unto Tech Duinn, the realm of ghosts and departed spirits; taking from him his oaken staff and giving him

a crown of holly leaves, saying, "Thou art Donn, the dark one, for thou hast brought death upon those whom thou hast given life. Depart now from this land and go forth to rule over the kingdom of the dead."

And when Cerna had taken the crown of holly leaves given him by Tuireann, the leaves of oak that made up the vestments of his apparel, which formerly appeared green and bright, began to wither and fade. Then did Cerna speak unto Tuireann, saying, "I shall not bide there alone," and he told Tuireann that while Brigid was with him she had eaten of the berries of the rowan that grew amid the trees of his forest, and because she had partaken of them she was bound to dwell with him. Unto which Tuireann replied "Only for a season."

And Tuireann decreed that from Imbolc to Samhain, the goddess Brigid would dwell among the Tuatha Dé Danann and thereafter, while in the realm of the dead, she should not be seen in the shape of the beautiful maiden that had filled Cerna's heart with longing, but as Morrigan, a haggard old crone who appears to wayfarers as three dark birds of death, Nemain, Macha and Badb, who stand at the entrance to Tech Duinn croaking out the warning "Do not enter, keep away, pass by!"

And so it came to pass that when Brigid went forth to dwell in the land of the dead each Samhain at the ending of the harvest season, the earth became dark and cold, and growing things would wither and fade, so that during this season the race of man might survive only by bringing death and slaughter to the beasts of the forests and fields.

But upon her return to Tir nan'Og each spring she would go at dawn on the morning of Imbolc to the well of youth and drink the water therefrom and be transformed once again into a fair and beautiful maiden whose touch turns the grass to green once more. Then would the days grow longer and brighter, and the earth become bountiful once again; and so men would return to the plough and seek the blessings of the gods upon their crops.

And as a reminder to all that life and death are forever connected one to the other, it was the legacy of Cerna that the serpent, whose bite is the most deadly of all creatures, should come forth from the depths of the earth each spring to bide among the forests and fields as a symbol that death is ever present wherever there is life. Yet even as the serpent doth shed its skin to be renewed, so too does new life come forth from death also.

But lo, a prophecy was foretold by Brighid, that a day should come when the gods themselves must take leave of their own immortal land, even as her children had been banished from its shores by Tuireann's pride, so too would the Tuatha Dé Danann be made to flee and seek refuge amid the mortal lands of the earth. And likewise, as Cerna had been cast out and sent forth to dwell within the nether realm, it should come to pass that the race of men would someday compel all the gods to live amid the hollow places under the earth in the land that they should come to dwell in.

chapter two

the voyage of fionntan

And lo, the race of man grew in number with each passing generation until they were scattered to the four corners of the world. And so it was that among them there was a man named Fionntan son of Bochrá, who dwelled together with his people in the East. Now Cessair, the wife of Fionntan, was a priestess among those people, and she ordained that an idol should be built to serve as an oracle to their tribe, to advise them in all matters. And it was Bith, the father of Cessair who wrought the idol, and charmed with it with magical enchantments. And lo, the idol spake unto them and told them to seek a distant island that lay far to the west where they should settle.

Therefore Fionntan, together with Cessair his wife, and Bith, her father, and Bairrhind, her mother; along with Ladra the navigator, and Alba, the wife of Ladra, and forty eight more women besides did set sail for the west in search of this island.

For seven years they sailed upon the sea together with their flocks in a company of three boats, but during the voyage two of their ships were wrecked and it was their vessel alone that reached the shores of the island which is Ireland, and there they landed at Dun nam'Barc.

And when they landed Cessair ordained that Bith, Fionntan and Ladra should divide the forty eight other women of their company between them equally, so that no woman among them was without a husband and that the land might be populated thereby from their offspring. Unto Bith went Sella,

Della, Duib, Addeos, Fotra, Traige, Nera, Buana, Tamall, Tanna, Nathra, Leos, Fodarg, Rodarg, Dos, and Clos, along with Bairrhind. And unto Fionntan went Lot, Luam, Mall, Mar, Froechar, Femar, Faible, Foroll, Cipir, Torrian, Tamall, Tam, Abba, Alla, Baichne, and Sille, along with Cessair. And unto Ladra went Bona, Albor, Ail, Gothiam, German, Aithne, Inde, Rodarg, Rinne, Inchor, Ain, Irrand, Espa, Sine, and Samoll, along with Alba.

But so demanding of attention were the women that the three men soon began to grow weary of exhaustion, and it was not long before Ladra died, and his wives were divided between Fionntan and Bith. But lo, Bith, who had settled in the northern part of Ireland, died also, leaving Fionntan alone with all the women.

Fearing that he too might succumb to the same fate, Fionntan fled from the women and hid in a cave on Tul Tuinde. So greatly grieved was Cessair over this that she died of a broken heart, and six days afterwards all the other women perished in a flood that fell upon Ireland, but Fionntan escaped having invoked the spell of the feth-fiada to turn himself into a salmon, in which shape he remained for many years until he became an eagle, and then thereafter a hawk, before finally retaking his own shape as a man once more so that his story could be told.

chapter three

the journey of parthalon

For three hundred years thereafter did Ireland remain desolate until the coming of Parthalon son of Sera, son of Sru, son of Esru, son of Gaedel Glas, son of Nuil, son of Feinius Farsaid. He came, together with Dalgat his wife, and their three sons, Slaine, Rudraige and Laiglinne, and their wives with them, who were Nerba, Cichba, and Cerbnad. These and a thousand other followers came with Parthalon to Ireland.

From the land of Scythia they set sail and for a year they voyaged until they reached the land of Greece, thither did they sail westward for a month until they came to Cappadocia, thence for three days more they sailed until they reached Gothia and from there they sailed for another month until they arrived in Spain, from whence they made their way to Ireland and there they landed at Inber Scene.

Among the company that Parthalon brought to Ireland were his ten daughters, Aife, Aine, Adnad, Macha, Mucha, Melepard, Glas, Grenach, Auach and Achanach; and with them their husbands, Aidbli, Bomnad, Ban, Caertin, Echtach, Athchosan, Lucraid, Ligair, Lugaid, and Gerber. Three Druids did Parthalon bring with him, whose names were Fiss, Eolas and Eochmarc, and three great champions named Milchu, Meran and Muinechan. Seven chief ploughmen did Parthalon bring to Ireland, and

these were Totacht, Tarba, Eochar, Aithechbel, Cuaille, Dorcha and Dam; and four oxen named Liac, Lecmag, Imar and Etrigi who first ploughed the soil of Ireland.

And the land of Ireland was divided up into four parts by Parthalon and his sons, and they did clear four plains out of the great forests that grew there, Mag Itha in Laigen; Mag Tuired in Connacht; Mag Li in Ui mac Uais; Mag Ladrang in Dal nAraide. And in that time seven new lakes burst forth in that land, Lough Laighlinne in Ui mac Uais of Breg; Lough Cuan and Lough Rudraige in Ulster; Lough Dechet and Lough Mese and Lough Con in Connacht; and Lough Echtra in Airgialla.

For three years did Parthalon and his people live in peace and prosperity in that land until they were challenged by the Fomoraig, a cruel race of malevolent beings that came forth from over the sea to Ireland from Lochlann and wrought war and pillage upon them. Thus did Parthalon and his men enjoin them at Mag Ithe, in the first battle ever fought in Ireland, and Parthalon slew Cicol chieftain of the Fomoraig, and drove them out of the land.

But lo, death came to Parthalon and his people on Senmag, the old plain, where five thousand men and four thousand women did perish in a single week from a plague that fell upon them on the day of Beltane, and none save one man among them did survive to tell their tale, and he was Tuan son of Starn son of Sera; the nephew of Parthalon.

chapter four

the adventures of neimheadh

For thirty years did Tuan bide alone, wandering the isle of Ireland and living in dead men's houses seeking shelter from wolves until he had grown long-haired, clawed, decrepit, grey, naked, wretched and miserable; and it was in this state that Tuan survived to see the arrival of Neimheadh and his followers upon the shores of Ireland.

Now Neimheadh son of Agnoman, son of Pamp, son of Tat, son of Sera of Scythia, commanded a fleet of thirty-four ships with thirty men to each vessel which sailed upon the Caspian Sea. And lo, there appeared unto them one day a tower of gold standing on a small island close by in the sea. And the island did vanish beneath the waves each time the tides came in, but reappeared again when the waters did ebb.

Great was the desire of Neimheadh's men to plunder the gold from which the tower was made, and they turned their fleet toward it, perceiving that they might land on the isle where the tower stood when the tide fell low, that they might then take the gold. And so Neimheadh and his men came upon the tower at low tide to make plunder, but of a sudden did the tide return and it crashed down upon Neimheadh's fleet, so that every boat among them did sink, save the one which bore Neimheadh together with his wife, Macha, and their four sons, the chieftains Sarn, Iarbone, Annind, and Fergus Lethderg,

with their wives Medb, Machu, Yba, and Cera, and for a year and a half they did drift alone at sea.

And it came to pass that Neimheadh and his sons did come upon Ireland whereby they took it and did settle there, for no man did live upon that isle, save Tuan son of Starn son of Sera, who saw his kinsman Neimheadh come ashore as he was sitting one day atop a high cliff overlooking the sea. And the tribe of Neimheadh did prosper there for a season and they did multiply until they numbered four thousand strong.

Four lakes did burst forth in Ireland during the time of Neimheadh, Lough Cal in Ui Niallain, Lough Munremair in Luigne, Lough Dairbrech, and Lough Annind in Meath. Twelve plains were cleared by Neimheadh in Ireland, Mag Cera, Mag Eba, Mag Cuile Tolaid, and Mag Luirg in Connacht; Mag Seired in Tethba; Mag Tochair in Tir Eogain; Mag Selmne in Araide; Mag Macha in Airgialla; Mag Meath in Brega; Mag Bernsa in Laighne; Leccmag and Mag Moda in Mumu.

But lo, the Fomoraig did learn of their presence in that land and they came forth from the sea to do battle with the people of Neimheadh. Three times did they engage in conflict with the Fomoraig, in the battle of Badbgna in Connacht, in the battle of Cnamros in Laigne, and in the battle of Murbolg in Dal Riada, until Neimheadh himself did slay Gand and Sengand who were the two great chiefs of the Fomoraig, which he did kill at Ros Fraechain. And Neimheadh's army drove the Fomoraig from the land and they did retreat to their stronghold at Tor Innis.

And as tribute were the Fomoraig compelled to build two great fortresses for Neimheadh, Rath Chimbaith in Semne and Rath Cindeich in Ui Niallain. The four sons of Matan Munremar, Boc, Roboc, Ruibne, and Rotan, did build these two strongholds; and on the day that this work was completed did Neimheadh slay them at Daire Lige, lest they should build like fortresses for the Fomoraig.

But lo, thereafter a plague fell upon Ireland and from it half of the people living in that country did die; and Neimheadh himself fell ill and languished from his sickness until he died in a decrepit state, and his body was buried in Ui Liathain on that isle which was henceforth called Ard Neimheadh. And when Conand son of Febar, King of the Fomoraig, heard of the death of Neimheadh he sent forth his army from Tor Innis to lay siege against the people of Neimheadh and they did fall on them with great vengeance and did take their wrath upon them.

And Conand, King of the Fomoraig, did place Liagh, a woman of his tribe, over the people of Neimheadh to tax them, so that each household was made to pay three full measures of the cream of their milk, of the flour of their wheat, and of their butter, which they were compelled to deliver to Conan's fortress on Tor Innis.

And the Fomoraig did compel the people of Neimheadh to render unto them two thirds of their children and two thirds of their cattle every Samhain at Mag Cetne, so that those who dwelt in Ireland lived as vassals of the Fomoraig and sorely did they suffer by their rule.

Now woe befell the people of Neimheadh at these sorrows, and great was their anger and indignation toward the Fomoraig. And they did seek counsel from the wisest man in all of Ireland who was Fionntan, for he was the first of all men to come to that island, and in his long life he had taken many forms and seen the comings and goings of all the tribes who had sought to settle in that land.

And when the people of Neimheadh told him of their plight, Fionntan gave them wise counsel and told them that whatever tribute Fomoraig imposed upon them, that it was in their power to either bear it or to escape it, but that there was among them a quarrelsome party who, though few in number, did more harm to their cause than the tribute of the Fomoraig.

And so Fionntan implored the people of Neimheadh to flee from Ireland and escape the violence of the Fomoraig; but that they should divide their number, for not all would agree on where to go or what direction to take. And Fionntan foretold that the children of Beothach would depart their company and that among them a portion would journey north to distant lands; but that the children of Semeon should travel east to the land of the Greeks, and there would their numbers grow so that their sons and grandsons might live to return to Ireland some day and settle there once more.

When the people of Neimheadh heard Fionntan's counsel dissention broke out among them, as a faction arose who felt that they should not flee from Ireland but rather they should do battle with the Fomoraig and take the land by force of arms. Then Fergus Lethderg son of Neimheadh, together with his nephews Semul son of Iarbonel, and Erglan, son of Beoan, son of Starn, did gather together an army of their people who went forth to wage war against the Fomoraig at Tor Innis whereupon Fergus slew Conand and the Fomoraig that dwelt in the fortress of Tor Innis were vanquished.

At this time Morrig, a great chieftain of the Fomoraig, had been away at sea with his fleet of three-score ships, raiding along the coasts of Africa. But upon their return to Ireland, as they approached Tor Innis, Morrig perceived the slaughter that befell Conand and his men. And lo, the people of Neimheadh saw the fleet of Morrig approaching and they took to ships to meet them upon the sea to do battle with the Fomoraig.

And even as they fought, a great storm arose upon the sea and its waves crashed down upon the people of Neimheadh and did sink all of their ships save for a single vessel, which bore the last of their men, who were Erglan, Matach, Iartacht, Beothach, Briotan, Baath, Iobath, Bechach, Beathach,

Bronal, Pal, Goirthigorn, German, Glasa, Ceran, Gobran, Gothiam, Gam, Dam, Ding, Deal, Semeon, Fortecht, Gosten, Grimaig, Guillius, Taman, Turrue, Glas, Feb, Feran.

Of these, Beothach son of Iarbonel, son of Neimheadh, did remain in Ireland together with his ten wives, and they survived him for twenty three years after he died of the plague. Of his offspring, Iobath along with his son Baath, they did leave Ireland and set off northwards upon a journey to Lochlann.

As for the thirty other men, they did divide themselves into three companies of ten men each upon their departure from Ireland. Among them, Briotan Mhaol, son of Fergus Lethderg, son of Neimheadh, did go forth with his men unto the land of Britain, where he did settle and his generations gave rise to the race of the Britons.

Matach, Erglan and Iartach, the three sons of Beoan, son of Starn, son of Neimheadh, they went forth with the others of their company to Dobar and Iardobar in the north of Alba and from them are descended the race of the Cruithne. Semeon son of Erglan, son of Beoan, did journey to the land of the Greeks, where his generations did multiply until they numbered in the thousands.

These things and more did come to pass before Tuan son of Starn, son of Sera; for when the people of Neimheadh first came to Ireland he awoke from the spell of the feth-fiada in the shape of a young stag and in that form he was king of all the deer in Ireland, and he did see the rise and fall of Neimheadh and his people, but when they departed from that land, Ireland was desolate once more for two hundred years. In that time Tuan grew from a strong young buck into a grizzled old stag and he found himself stalked by hungry wolves who chased him into a cave where, weary from the chase, he fell into a slumber and dreamed that he had become a fearsome young boar, and when he awoke on the morrow he found that he had become a boar, and in that shape he lived to see the next taking of Ireland.

chapter five

the odyssey of the fir-bolg

Now great was the number of Semeon's issue in the land of the Greeks, and after many generations they were made slaves in that country whereby they were compelled to carry loads of earth from the depths of pits which they dug with their spears up onto the barren hilltops to make them fertile. This they did carry in leather bags which hung about their necks, so that they came to be called the Fir-bolg or men of bags.

And so they continued until they could no longer abide their oppression by the Greeks, and they did secretly fashion themselves boats made of wicker that they covered in the leather from which the bags of their burden had been made, and by this means they did escape, five thousand in all, whereby they made their way at night into the harbor where the vessels of the King of the Greeks were docked. There they did steal the King's galleys in which they made their voyage, and returned to Ireland.

Five chieftains had they among them, Gann, Ganann, Ruaighre, Sengann, and Slainge; these were the five sons of Dela, who was the son of Loth, son of Oirthet, son of Tribaut, son of Gothorb, son of Gosten, son of Fortech, son of Semeon, son of Erglan, son of Beoan, son of Starn, son of Neimheadh. And with them the sons of Dela brought their wives, Etar, the wife of Gann;

Cnucha, the wife of Gannan; Liber, the wife of Ruaighre; Anust, the wife of Sengann; and Fuat, the wife of Slainge.

For a year and three days they did sail west upon the waters until they reached Spain; and from thence they sailed for thirteen days more until they perceived the shores of Ireland lay ahead of them. And as they drew nigh upon the coast of Ireland a great wind did blow upon their fleet and their ships were scattered so that they did not all make land at one place. And so it was on Lughnasadh that Slainge did first set foot upon the shores of Ireland, together with a thousand of his men, at Inber Slaine. Then three days thereafter did Gann and Sengann come ashore together with two thousand of their men, at Inber Dubglaisi. Three days later did Gannan and Ruaighre make land at Inber Domnann together with two thousand of their men.

And the men of the tribe of Slainge were called by the name of Gaileon, from their javelins with which they used to dig. Likewise the men of the tribes of Gannan and Ruaighre were known as the Fir-Domnann or men of the depths, for the pits they had labored in. And the men of the tribes of Gann and Sengann were called the Fir-Bolg or men of bags, after the sacks they used to carry their burdens in, and it was by this name that all of them were known.

On their arrival in Ireland the five chieftains did meet upon the hill of Uisneach and there they divided the land between them into the five provinces of Ulster, Leinster, Munster, Connacht and Meath. Unto Ruaighre went the province of Ulster; unto Slainge went the province of Leinster; unto Sengann went the province of Munster; unto Gannan went the province of Connacht; and unto Gann did go the province of Meath.

And for thirty-seven years did the Fir-bolg hold Ireland, so that their chieftains were the first to be called the Kings of Ireland. Nine men of their race did take the throne of Ireland, Slainge who ruled for one year, he was the first of the men of the Fir-Bolg to die in Ireland; then Ruaighre who did rule for two years until he died at Brug Bratruad; afterwards did Gann and Gannan rule for the space of four years until they died of the plague in Fremaind; then was Sengann for five years upon the throne until he was killed by his nephew Rindail son of Gannan, who ruled for six years after him until he was slain at Eba Coirpre by Fodbgén son of Sengann; thereafter did Fodbgén rule for four years until he fell at Mag Muirthemne at the hands of Eochaid son of Eirc; then did Eochaid rule for ten years. During his reign no rain fell upon Ireland, only dew, yet there was not a year without a harvest; and by him were the laws of justice executed for the first time in Ireland.

And Tuan son of Starn did witness their reign over that land, for he was then the chief of all the boar-herds in Ireland, but after many years in that shape weariness and old age fell upon him, so he returned to his cave in Ulster where he fell into a slumber and did dream that he was a hawk, and when he awakened he found himself in the shape of a hawk. Stretching out his wings he took to the sky, soaring on the winds; and with keen eye he perceived the approach of strangers to the shores of Ireland.

chapter six

the exodus of the tuatha dé danann

Now it came to pass that Iobath, together with his son Baath, of the tribe of Neimheadh, had left Ireland in a journey to the northern land of Lochlann, but in the course of their voyage, their ship was blown astray in a storm that fell upon them at sea, and so their vessel was set adrift until they happened upon the fair and peaceful shores of the Isle of Tir nan'Og.

There they were greeted by the Tuatha Dé Danann who welcomed them and bid them to stay on their isle. And in that graceful land Baath and Iobath found a new home and did take wives of the Danann women, and they did learn Druidry, and knowledge, and prophecy, and magic until they were proficient in the arts of sorcery and enchantment. And by the seed of their generation was their blood mingled with that of the gods, so that their progeny dwelt in the land of Tir nan'Og among the Tuatha Dé Danann. Gods were their men of arts and non-gods were their husbandmen. They knew the incantations of Druids, and charioteers, and trappers, and cup-bearers.

Now the Fomoraig learned that mortal men had come to dwell in Tir nan'Og, and their minds were wrought with envy that the Tuatha Dé Danann had given their daughters as wives unto these men. And through their jealousy, the thoughts of the Fomoraig turned to deceiving the gods, that they might lay claim to their isle. Therefore the chiefs of the Fomoraig held council to

decide how they should proceed in their plan, and they resolved to send forth Elatha son of Delbaeth, the most noble prince of their race, to go to Tir nan'Og that he might beget a child by one of the daughters of the Tuatha Dé Danann. And by the spells and enchantment of their Druids, Elatha was transformed into the likeness of a fair-haired handsome warrior, whereupon he went forth in that guise to Tir nan'Og and did lay with Ériu daughter of Fiachna, who begat by him a son named Bres.

This brought forth the wrath of Tuireann, that a daughter of the Tuatha Dé Danann had begotten a child who was heir to the prince of the Fomoraig, for such was an abomination to him. And lo, the thunders did gather over the land of Tir nan'Og and lightening bolts did fall forth from the heavens and the whole island began to be shaken by great rumblings of the earth so that the buildings of the cities therein began to crumble and fall, and havoc reigned over the land, whereby it was laid waste through wreck and ruin.

Then did Tuireann give dominion over the whole of that island unto Manannan son of Lir, the lord of the waves, so that by his hand it was overcome by a mighty flood and the land of Tir nan'Og disappeared into the depths of the ocean in the space of a single day and night when the waves of the sea overtook it, and for this reason it was thenceforth called Tir fo Thonn, the 'Land Beneath the Wave'.

Therefore Nuada summoned the Tuatha Dé Danann together in council and besought them to assemble a fleet of ships and in these they departed in haste therefrom with Nuada as their leader. For long they sailed upon the open waters until at last they reached Dobar and Iardobar in the north of Alba and there did they bide for the space of four years before they crossed over unto Ireland, from whence Baath and Iobath had come. And the Tuatha Dé Danann brought with them four wondrous treasures, one from each of their great cities.

Out of Fálías was brought the Lia Fáil, the Stone of Destiny, which was placed in Tara; it used to roar under every king that would take the realm of Ireland. Out of Gorias was brought the Sleá Luin, the flaming Spear of Lugh; no battle was ever sustained against it, or against the man who held it in his hand. Out of Findias was brought the Claiomh Solais, the shining Sword of Nuada; no one ever escaped from it once it was drawn from its deadly sheath, and no one could resist it. Out of Murias was brought the Coire Anseasc, the Cauldron of Dagda; no company ever went away from it unsatisfied.

On the day of Beltane the Tuatha Dé Danann did land upon the shores of Ireland at Tracht Mughá in the province of Ulster. And Eochaid son of Eirc, the King of Ireland, had a vision of their coming which came to him as he slept. And when Eochaid awoke from his dream he was greatly troubled by it and sought counsel from Cesard his Druid.

The Druid asked the king what he had seen in his vision, and Eochaid told him that he had dreamed of a great flock of black birds that came forth from the depths of the ocean and lay siege upon the people of Ireland and brought to them conflict and turmoil and confusion, so that the people were destroyed, yet one of them struck the noblest of the birds and cut off one of its wings.

When the king had finished telling of his dream, the Druid told him its meaning, saying that a great host of warriors would come forth from over the sea and that they possessed vast knowledge of sorcery and magical enchantment and that they would conquer Ireland.

And when the Tuatha Dé Danann had landed upon the shores of Ireland they broke apart their ships and burned them, then did they go forth to Brefne in the province of Connacht and made themselves a camp there by the Red Hills of Rian. Contented were they with the land they had come to and they determined that they would make for themselves a new home in it.

chapter seven

the first Battle of mag tuireadh

When the Fir-bolg learned of the arrival of the Tuatha Dé Danann they sent forth men to look on them to see what manner of invaders had come to their land. Casting their gaze upon the encampment they perceived that this was the most beautiful, fearsome, and well armed host they had ever seen, and skillful were they in song and music, and in every art they surpassed all other peoples of the world.

Then did the Fir-bolg send forth Sreng, who was the greatest and most imposing of all their company, to speak to the strangers that had come to their land and ask of them their purpose. So did Sreng take up his shield and helmet, and arming himself with a pair of javelins together with his sword and battle-mace, he did venture forth to speak to the men of the Tuatha Dé Danann. And when they saw him draw nigh upon their camp, they sent forth Bres, the son of Elatha, to meet him. The two men confronted one another and looked with astonishment each upon the other for reason of their great size and the fierceness of their weapons.

Greeting each other from behind their shields they perceived that they spoke the same tongue, then did Bres recount the descent of his mother, Ériu daughter of Fiachna, son of Delbaeth, back to the line of Baath son of Iobath, son of Iarbone, son of Neimheadh; whereupon Sreng bid him

welcome saying that his people were of the same lineage, but cautioned him that should their forces take arms against one another it would be a woeful outcome.

Then did the two men lower their shields to gaze each upon the other's visage and talk more freely. After they had spoken, Bres gave Sreng this message, saying "Tell the Fir-Bolg to give battle or give up half of Ireland." And Sreng said unto him that he would rather give up half the country than to feel the edge of their weapons, thenceforth did they depart in peace and fellowship

When Sreng returned to the court of King Eochaid he related all that he had seen and that which was spoken between himself and Bres, saying that the Tuatha Dé Danann were fearsome and mighty warriors whose weapons were treacherous and deadly, and that they would fare better by giving them half their land than to die upon the field of battle. And when the king and his men heard this, they did voice their objection saying that if they gave the Tuatha Dé Danann half their land, then soon would they take all of Ireland.

And so the Tuatha Dé Danann prepared to do battle with the Fir Bolg, seeking themselves a stronghold they removed their camp to Sliabh Belgadain where they encamped at the end of the Black Hill. Then did the Morrigan go forth as three black ravens, Nemain, Macha and Badb, to the court of King Eochaid, and with sorcery she did cause a great mist to fall upon his soldiers, and for three days it did pour forth a rain of red blood upon his men, so that they could have no peace or rest.

Then gathered the armies of the Fir-Bolg from the five provinces of Ireland and they marched in eleven legions to the plain of Mag Nia where they took position against the ranks of the Tuatha Dé Danann whose seven legions held the western end of the field of battle. And when they had gathered, Nuada sent forth Cairbre, Ai, and Edan, the Filid of the Tuatha Dé Danann, to give the Fir-Bolg their terms that the country should be evenly divided between their two peoples. Yet no agreement could they reach; wherefore the Fir-Bolg called for the battle to be delayed until they could better prepare for combat.

And when the Fir-Bolg had made ready for war, Eochaid, their king sent forth his Druid, Fathach, to ask of the Tuatha Dé Danann how long they intended to carry on the battle, whether it should last for one day or for several, and they answered him saying that it would be a long fight of equal numbers that would be fought until one side had vanquished the other.

Then did the Fir-bolg call upon Fionntan, whom they deemed to be the wisest man in all of Ireland, for he had come there with Cessair long before any other races had set foot upon the shores of that land and had seen many things in his long life through his many forms. And by his counsel the

Fir-bolg made a deep trench about their fortress and made a well of healing wherein they placed herbs to salve the sores of their wounded; and likewise the Tuatha Dé Danann did also.

And after six weeks had passed the army of the Fir-Bolg marched forth upon the field of Mag Nia on the morning of midsummer, and their Druid, Fathach, went ahead of them and between the two armies he did raise a pillar of stone in the midst of the plain, and he recited his invocation to bring forth the battle fury amongst the Fir-Bolg.

Whereupon Dagda led the Tuatha Dé Danann to advance upon their enemies, and they rushed forth from the western end of the field and did clash with the Fir-Bolg, cutting through their ranks. Then did Cirb advance against the Tuatha Dé Danann, breaking their line; and so the battle did continue until the field was covered with the bodies of the slain and wounded from each side.

By the day's end the Tuatha Dé Danann were driven back and they retreated to their camp. The Fir-bolg reckoning that they had gained victory did not give pursuit, but retired to their own encampment. Then the men of both the armies brought forth each of them a stone for every head they had taken, and with them, both sides built cairns to the memory of those who had fallen. And the wounded of each side were put into the wells of healing in which herbs had been cast, that their wounds might be healed.

As dawn broke on the morrow the warriors of both armies returned to the field with vigor and began the fighting anew. So fierce was their battle that the bosses of their shields were torn asunder and spears were wrenched from their hands. Swords were shattered on broken bones and cries of anguish filled the air. By nightfall the Fir-Bolg had been driven from the battlefield.

As their men each brought forth a stone to place upon the cairn for the heads they had taken, King Eochaid greeted his warrior, Cirb, asking if it was they who were beaten that day, and Cirb answered his king saying it were so, but that the Tuatha Dé Danann should not profit by the outcome of the day's battle.

The next day, as they prepared for battle, the Tuatha Dé Danann gathered in council to determine who would lead their army; whereupon Dagda spoke, saying, "It is I who shall do it, for in me you have an excellent warrior." And he went forth together with his sons and brothers to make battle against the ranks of the Fir Bolg once more.

Great was the calamity upon the field that day, as Dagda wrought slaughter against the Fir Bolg even as their warrior Cirb laid waste to many among the ranks of the Tuatha Dé Danann; and each perceived the din of the thunderous blows made by the other, until the two came face to face. With furious clashing of their swords they fought one another until at dusk

Cirb did fall and the Firbolg were driven back to their fort. The Tuatha Dé Danann returned to their camp, building a cairn of stones for every head they had taken, and the head of Cirb was placed on top of the cairn.

That night Fionntan the wise came together with his thirteen sons, to Eochaidh, King of the Fir Bolg, vowing to fight for him, and together they formed a guard of steadfast warriors who were the most loyal troop in Eochaidh's army.

Terrible was the spectacle of battle the next day as the two armies fought, hard pressing upon one another, converging and recoiling amidst the clamor and gore that covered the field where they fought. The Druids standing atop their pillars uttering dreadful imprecations, and the Bards lauding the feats of courage engaged in by the warriors. In the midst of the battle stood Nuada of the Tuatha Dé Danann and Sreng of the Fir Bolg. Blood and carnage covered the ground all around them.

All of this the Druid Fathach saw, standing atop his pillar surveying the scene before him, lamenting:

“The Firbolg will lose many brothers;
Countless will be the rolling heads and maimed bodies
Upon the plain as they fall beside their shields.
No faith have I in their strength while I remain in tumultuous Ireland.
I, Fathach the Druid, am overwhelmed with deep sorrow
As I watch the Firbolg falling,
I surrender to the swift advance of disaster.”

All around black robed Druidesses with unkempt hair hanging about their faces ran to and fro between the ranks of the warriors, brandishing torches and shrieking aloud, and the cries of their voices echoed in the rocks and waterfalls and in the hollows of the earth. Chaos and terror filled the land. Two heroes yet struggled on the field of battle, hacking with strong arms, their hearts enraged. At the sight of them the armies halted and wavered, falling back in awe of the conflict. The plain was cleared around the mighty warriors, and to them was left the battle.

Their furious steps tore the firm sod beneath their feet. Thirty blows were passed between them, whereupon Sreng heaved his sword at Nuada slashing the rim of Nuada's shield and cutting off his right arm at the shoulder. The king's arm fell to the ground, but the Dagda rushed forth and stood guard over Nuada. Then the chiefs of the Tuatha Dé Danann raised up their leader and brought him forth from the battlefield, as the blood of his severed arm poured down upon their bended backs.

As that dark day drew to a close and night fell upon the land covering it in black shadows, Nuada, called out from the place where he lay, saying, "Tell me, Dagda, how does the battle stand?"

"I will tell thee, noble Nuada," answered Dagda, "its misfortunes and disasters I will also relate. Our nobles fell before the violence of the Firbolg. Great is the loss to our cause, so that we can scarcely reckon it. But Bres stood like a tower upon the field of carnage and wrought havoc upon the Firbolg, to the number of six score and ten of their men.

"Then rage filled mighty Sreng. Nine blows did he cause to fall upon your shield. It seemed impossible that you could withstand him, O impetuous Nuada; and with a swift stroke of his terrible sword he slashed off your right arm. Dismay fell upon us and many good warriors lay reeking blood red wounds.

"Eochaid, the High king of the Fir Bolg, and his son Slainge the Fair, likewise brought dreadful combat against us. But Eochaidh being unable to quench his thirst made for the Strand of Eothail. There Cessarb, Luam and Luachra surprised him, and Slainge seeking to defend his father joined in. Not one among them survived that conflict.

"It then followed that Sreng held forth on the field of battle and grim were the faces of our warriors who looked upon him, yet they did not falter. Weariness at last overtook both sides, so that our armies halted the slaughter to rest and contemplate the events of the day."

Grief-stricken, wounded and forlorn were the Firbolg that night. Each man among them buried his kinsmen and companions. They built mounds over their chiefs and cairns over the warriors, and placed standing stones over the graves of heroes. Thereafter they gathered together in council to determine whether they should forsake Ireland, or continue the fight, or share the land with the Tuatha Dé Danann. It was resolved that they should make one last battle, though it pained their hearts to consider it. Whereupon Sreng lamented:

"Resistance will be the death of our people.
Though we are determined to battle on;
Through the clashing of strong blades,
The torrent of spears cast by noble warriors,
And the bursting of bosses upon shields.
Filled with turmoil are the plains of Ireland.
Calamity met us under the trees,
As many good men did fall."

The following day the Fir Bolg made a final charge against the Tuatha Dé Danann. Wild and filled with fury were their soldiers, their spears bristling,

their swords cutting a swathe of terror against the opposing army. When the Tuatha Dé Danann saw this, they drew back in dismay and called for a truce to be made between them. “Give unto Sreng the province of his choice,” they said. “Let us put an end to this slaughter.”

All were in agreement with this, and peace was made. Sreng chose the province of Connacht, and there the Firbolg took possession. The Tuatha Dé Danann were given the other four provinces of Ireland. And because Nuada, who for seven years had led them, was maimed in battle, they chose Bres to rule over them as king in his stead.

chapter eight

the reign of Bres

In the days before the Tuatha Dé Danann came to dwell in Ireland, Ériu the daughter of Fiachna, son of Delbaeth, son of Oghma, who lived in the land of Tir nan'Og, was one day looking out to sea from the house of Maeth Sceni and she beheld that it was a quiet day and that the water was strangely calm, so that no waves broke upon its surface. And there appeared before her on the horizon a vessel of silver which drew nearer and nearer until the flow of the tide brought it to land.

Aboard it was a man of the fairest form she had ever looked upon; his yellow hair flowing down to his shoulders, his rich garments embroidered with gold. A brooch of gold bejeweled with a precious stone was set upon his chest; five circlets of gold he wore about his neck; a golden hilted sword inlaid with silver was girded about his waist, and a pair of silver spears with smooth riveted shafts of bronze he held in the grip of his hand. The fair stranger spoke to Ériu, saying that on this day she would lay with him. But she answered him, saying "I have made no tryst with thee." To which the stranger replied "What need is there for a tryst?" And so they laid themselves down together.

When the man arose, Ériu wept. "For what cause do thy tears fall?" he asked. She answered him saying, "I cry for two reasons. Firstly, that thou dost possess me now, though all the youths of the Tuatha Dé Danann have courted me in vain; secondly, that thou will soon depart."

On hearing her words he drew forth a gold ring from the middle finger of his hand and gave it to her saying, "Part not with this neither by sale nor by gift, except to one whose finger it shall fit." Taking the ring into her hand she lamented, "Another sorrow have I, for I do not know who has come to me."

Then the stranger spoke to her, saying, "There is no reason for mystery there, for it is I, Elatha son of Delbaeth, son of Net, the king of the Fomoraig, who hast lain with thee. Thou shalt bear by me a son and his name shall be Eochaid Bres, that is to say 'Eochaid the Beautiful'. Every lovely thing to be seen, be it field or fortress, ale or candle, woman or man or horse, shall be compared to him, so people will say 'It is like unto Bres.'"

In time Ériu was delivered of a boy child and he was named Bres, even as Elatha had said. In seven days he had made a fortnight's growth, and in seven years he had the growth of fourteen summers. And when the Tuatha Dé Danann departed from the land of Tir nan'Og and journeyed unto Ireland, Bres went forth with them, for he had grown to become a mighty warrior and fought alongside his mother's people when they took the country from the Fir Bolg.

And when the Tuatha Dé Danann gathered in council to decide who should be king because of the wounding of Nuada, for he was no longer whole; they chose Bres thinking that he might bring lasting peace between the Tuatha Dé Danann and the Fomoraig, who were his father's people. His mother gave Bres land and the fortress of Dun Brese was built there.

But lo, even after Bres was made king, Indech, Elatha and Tethra, three kings of the Fomoraig put all who did dwell in Ireland under heavy tribute so that everything down to the smoke of their fires was taxed. And even the nobles of the Tuatha Dé Danann were pressed into service. Oghma was made to carry wood for the fires of Bres' palace, and Dagda was set to building ramparts and digging trenches around it, and by his toil was all of the fort of Dun Brese built.

Soon Dagda grew discontent with this menial labor, and worse still he was made to take his supper in the house of his overseer, a blind old satirist named Cridenbel whose mouth grew out of his chest. Cridenbel perceived that his own ration was meager next to that of Dagda's and he besought him to share his fare with him, saying "O, Dagda on thine honor, give me the three best portions of thy meal!" and, as a noble must never refuse a request made on his honor, so Dagda gave a third of his meal to Cridenbel each night. But large indeed were the portions given to Cridenbel, each being the size of a full grown pig, so that soon Dagda began to grow lean and weak with hunger.

Now it happened that one day when Dagda was laboring in the trench around Dun Brese, his son Oengus approached him, and upon greeting him

he saw the condition of his father and asked why he had grown so frail of health. Dagda told Oengus of his plight, to which Oengus replied "I have counsel for thee," and he drew forth from his purse three coins of gold, and gave them to Dagda, saying "Put these three coins of gold into the three portions which thou givest to Crindenbel," said Oengus. "Those bits shall then be the best upon thy plate; and the gold will turn in his belly so that he will die thereof, and the judgment of Bres thereupon will be wrong.

"Men will say to the king that thou hast killed Crindenbel by means of a deadly herb which thou gavest him. Then will the king order thee to be slain. But thou shalt say to him "What thou utterest, O king, is not a prince's truth, for I was overseen by Crindenbel when I was at my toil, and he used to beseech me, saying 'Give me, O Dagda, the three best portions of thy meal, for little have I to dine upon.'" So that I would have perished thereby had not the three gold coins which I found today helped me. I placed them in my ration then did I give it to Crindenbel, for the gold was the best thing that was before me. Wherefore, the gold is within Crindenbel's belly, and he died of it." Dagda took the advice of Oengus, and was called before the king.

Thereupon Bres declared "It is clear, let the satirist's belly be cut open to see if the gold be found therein. If it be not found, thou shalt die. If, however, it be found, thou shalt have life." And when they cut open Crindenbel's belly, the three coins of gold were found in his stomach, so that Dagda was spared. Then Dagda returned to his labor the next morning, and to him came Oengus and said, "Thou wilt soon finish thy work, but thou shalt not seek reward till all the cattle of Ireland are brought unto thee, and of them choose a black-maned heifer."

Thereafter Dagda's work being completed, Bres asked of him what he would take as a payment for his labor. The Dagda answered, saying "I charge thee to gather all the cattle of Ireland into one place." Which the king did even as Dagda had asked, and Dagda chose of them the heifer which Oengus had told him to choose. Which Bres deemed to be a foolish choice indeed, thinking that Dagda would have requested something of far more cost.

And during the reign of Bres there was great unrest in the land and much grumbling against him among the Tuatha Dé Danann, for while he was king their knives were not greased by the meat of his table, and there was no smell of ale upon their breaths. Nor did they see any of their Filid nor their Bards nor their satirists nor their harpers nor their pipers nor their trumpeters nor their jugglers nor their jesters entertaining them at his court. They did not go to contests of those pre-eminent in the arts, nor did they see their warriors proving their skills through feats of strength before the king, except for Oghma. Yet his lowly task was to bring firewood to the king's fortress. Each day he was made to carry a great bundle of logs from the islands of Clew Bay,

but the sea swept away two-thirds of his burden, for he was sorely weak from hunger.

When therefore the Bard Cairbre of the Tuatha Dé Danann, came one day to the court of Bres, he was given lodge in a small, dark, dreary, little shack, having neither a fire, nor a chair, nor a bed within it. For his fare he was given but three small cakes which were dry. When he arose on the morrow he was bitter with indignation. As he entered the hall of Bres he intoned a withering satire, singing:

“Without food quickly served,
Without cow’s milk for a calf to grow on,
Without a dwelling fit for a man under the dark of night,
Without the means to entertain a Bardic company,
Let such be the condition of Bres.”

Cairbre truthfully declared, “There is no prosperity under Bres.” And thenceforth was there a blight upon him, and this was the first satire composed against a king in Ireland.

After this the Tuatha Dé Danann assembled together before their foster son Bres and demanded of him their sureties. He restored unto them their realm, as they regarded him unfit to rule thenceforth. Yet Bres asked to retain the kingship for seven years, to which they agreed, provided that every payment that should be rendered unto him, be it house or land, gold or silver, cattle or food, would be vouchsafed by the same sureties, and that they be given freedom from tribute and taxes until then. Whereupon Bres answered them, saying “Ye shall have as ye say.” Yet all the while Bres thought to gather an army of warriors among the Fomoraig whereby he might rule over the Tuatha Dé Danann by force of arms, which was his reason for asking the delay of seven years.

And Bres did go unto his mother Ériu and asked her where his family was. Whereupon she did say unto him “I am certain about that” and gave to him the ring that Elatha had left her. Bres took the ring and placed it upon his middle finger which it fit to perfection. Thenceforth they did travel together unto Lochlann, to the lands of the Fomoraig, whereupon they came to a great plain on which was held many assemblies. They went forth to the fairest of these assemblies where tidings were asked of them. They replied that they had come forth from Ireland.

And as it was the custom in those days that when a host went forth to an assembly they should be challenged to a friendly contest, they were asked whether they had any hounds; “We have hounds” replied Bres. So they set to racing hounds, and the dogs of Bres were swifter than the dogs of the

Fomoraig. Next they were asked whether they had steeds for a horse-race. They answered, "we have," and the steeds of Bres were swifter than the steeds of the Fomoraig.

Thereafter they were asked whether they had anyone who was good at sword-play. None was found save Bres alone and lo, even as Bres took sword in hand, Elatha perceived the ring upon his finger and demanded that Bres tell him who he was. Then Ériu answered on his behalf and told the king that Bres was his son and she related to him the true tale of his birth.

His father took pity upon him, and asked "What cause bringest thou here from the land that thou ruleth?" And Bres answered him saying "Naught, save for my own injustice and pride. I took their riches and their lands and their food. Until my reign none had demanded of them any tribute or taxes." And Elatha admonished him, saying "Regrettable is this to hear, for better be their prosperity than thy kingship; better are their blessings than their curses. What hast brought thou here?"

Bres answered his father, saying "To ask for soldiers since I mean to keep the land by force." Hearing his request, Elatha told him that such might be achieved through justice alone. Then Bres asked of him his advice in this matter, but Elatha offered him none, sending him instead to Balor the king of the Hebrides and to Indech another king of the Fomoraig. Then did these kings gather all their forces from Lochlann southward to Erin, to impose tribute and rule by force, and their ships stretched as a single bridge from the Hebrides to Ireland. No host ever came to that land which was more terrifying than their warriors.

When Bres had departed to Lochlann, Nuada was restored to the throne as king of the Tuatha Dé Danann, for Diancécht the healer had fitted him with a new arm of silver made by Credne, which was as good as any other, having movement in every finger and joint. Therefore was he once more a whole man.

Yet Miach the son of Diancécht deemed the arm of silver to be unnatural, wherefore he went to the arm which had been replaced by Diancécht, and he said "Joint to joint of it and sinew to sinew," and he healed Nuada in nine days and nights. The first three days he put the arm against Nuada's side, and it became covered with flesh. The next three days Nuada carried the arm upon his chest. The final three days Miach cast upon the arm of Nuada white wisps of smoke from black bulrushes after they had been burned in a fire.

But lo, Diancécht was filled with envy over the skill of his son's cure, and in anger he flung a sword upon the crown of Miach's head and cut the skin down to the flesh. But Miach healed the wound by means of his skill. Diancécht smote him again and cut the flesh till he reached the bone; whereupon Miach healed this by the same means. Diancécht struck him a

third blow and cut him to the tissue of his brain. Miach healed this also by the same means. Then Diancécht struck a fourth blow and Miach's brain was rent in two so that he died thereof; and Diancécht said that no healer might mend him of that blow.

Thereafter Diancécht buried Miach, and from his grave grew three hundred and sixty-five herbs, according to the number of his joints and sinews. Then Airmed, the sister of Miach, opened her mantle and separated those herbs according to their properties. But Diancécht came to her, and he confused the herbs, so that no one knows their proper cures unless the gods should teach them. And Diancécht said "If Miach be not, Airmed shall remain."

chapter nine

the coming of lugh

During the reign of Bres it happened that a certain Druid among the Fomoraig had prophesied unto Balor the king of the Hebrides, that he would be slain by his own grandson. Fearing that this prophecy might come to pass, Balor imprisoned his only child, a daughter named Ethniu, in his fortress on Tor Innis. Twelve matrons were placed there to guard her and keep her from ever looking upon the face of any man. It was in the seclusion of that bleak and dreary stronghold that Ethniu grew into a beautiful young maiden.

Now Cian the son of Diancécht dwelt in a place that was called Druim na Teine together with his brothers Goibniu and Samthainn. And Cian owned an enchanted cow, the Glas Gaibhnenn, whose milk was so abundant that everyone did envy him and desired to possess the cow, and Balor was among those who did covet this cow. One day Cian went forth with Samthainn to the forge of Goibniu, that they might have new swords made. Cian entered into the forge, leaving Samthainn outside to guard the cow.

Whereupon Balor did appear unto Samthainn, by his powers of enchantment, in the guise of a little red-haired boy who told him that he had overheard Cian and Goibniu within scheming to use the best steel for their own swords, while making Samthainn's blade from mere iron alone. This angered Samthainn greatly so that he went forth into the forge to make certain that his own sword was in no way inferior to the blades of the others;

and in his absence Balor seized hold of the cow, and brought her forth to Tor Innis.

Now Cian was sorely grieved by his loss, and he did seek guidance from a Druid in the hope that he would advise him as to how the cow might be regained. But the Druid told him that as long as Balor lived the cow would never be returned because of Balor's evil eye which struck dead anyone who it gazed upon. In despair, Cian then went forth unto a cunning Druidess named Biróg, who took him, dressed in women's clothes, with her across the sea to Tor Innis.

The matrons who guarded Ethniu took them to be noble ladies in the service of a high queen, and gave shelter unto them. Biróg then cast a magic spell which lulled the matrons of Ethniu to sleep, whereby Cian did enter the cell of Balor's daughter, and she gave to him her love. And when Cian had departed, soon thereafter did Ethniu's guards discover that she was with child.

Dreading the wrath of Balor, the matrons led Ethniu to believe that Cian's visit had been but a dream, yet in time Ethniu gave birth to three babes, and the news of this reached Balor. In his fury, he decreed that the three children be drowned in a whirlpool that lay off the shores of Tor Innis.

The three infants were wrapped in the sheet of the bed in which they were born and given to one of Balor's henchmen to be killed; but along the way the pin of the sheet came loose and one of the children fell forth from it and went into a shallow bay which was thereafter named Port na Delig, meaning 'Haven of the Pin'. The other two infants were cast into the sea, whereby Balor's henchman declared his job to be done.

When Biróg learned of this she used her enchantment to place a feth-fiada upon the two babes that had been thrown into the sea, so that they were transformed into a pair of seals, and from them is all of the race of the seal people descended. Then she took the child who had fallen into the bay and returned him to his father Cian, who named the boy Lugh and gave him forth in fosterage unto Tailtiu, the widow of Eochaid, the slain king of the Fir Bolg, that he might be kept safely hidden from Balor.

But lo, Tailtiu was put in bondage by the Fomoraig and by her labor was cleared the plain called Mag Breg in Meath, but the weariness of her toil overcame her so that she perished. And after Tailtiu's death Lugh was given in fosterage to Manannan the son of Lir, who raised him in Tir fo Thonn and there taught him all the secrets of magic and trained him in the way of warriors.

With his arm restored, Nuada took back the throne from Bres and to celebrate this he did host a great feast at Tara for the Tuatha Dé Danann. And Lugh, having grown into a strong and handsome young warrior, came forth

from Emhain Abhlach unto Tara to attend the feast. And at that time Nuada had two gatekeepers at Tara whose names were Gamal mac Figail and Camall mac Riagail. And as they stood guarding the gate, they saw approaching them a strange company led by a beautiful youth having a king's diadem upon his brow.

When they told the gatekeepers to announce their arrival in Tara, Camall asked, "Who has come forth?" to which he received the answer "Lugh Lamhfada has come, the son of Cian son of Diancecht, and of Ethne daughter of Balor. He is the foster son of Tailtiu, the daughter of Magmor, the king of Spain, and of Manannan son of Lir."

Then the gatekeeper asked of Lugh, "What art do you practice? For no one without a skill enters into Tara." And Lugh replied to him, saying "Ask me, for I am a builder." To which the gatekeeper responded, "We do not need you. We have a builder already, Luchta is his name."

Then said Lugh, "Ask me, for I am a smith." The doorkeeper answered him, saying "We have a smith already, Goibniu is his name." And Lugh replied, "Ask me, for I am a champion." But the gatekeeper told him "We do not need you. We have a champion already, Oghma is his name." Lugh spoke again, saying "Ask me, for I am a harper." But Camall told him "We do not need you. We have a harper already, Abcan son of Bicelmois, who was chosen by the Tuatha De Danann."

Then Lugh said, "Ask me, for I am a warrior." To which the gatekeeper answered, "We do not need you. We have a warrior already, Bresal Etarlam is his name." To which Lugh replied "Ask me, gatekeeper. For I am a Bard and a Seannachie." but Camall responded, "We do not need you. We already have a Bard and Seannachie named En son of Ethamain."

Lugh continued, saying "Ask me, for I am a Druid." To which was given the answer "We do not need you. We have many Druids already." But Lugh persisted, saying, "Ask me, for I am a healer." And still he was told "We do not need you. We have Diancecht as a healer." Lugh went on, saying "Ask me for I am a cupbearer." Yet Camall answered him "We do not need you. We have cupbearers already, Delt and Drucht and Daithe, Tae and Talom and Trog, Gle and Glan and Glesse." Then Lugh said, "Ask me, for I am a good brazier." To which Camall responded "We do not need you. We have a brazier already, Credne is his name."

At last Lugh said, "Ask the king whether he has one man who possesses all these arts, if so I will quit the gates of Tara." Whereupon the gatekeeper went forth into the court of Nuada and related everything to the king, saying "The Samildanach named Lugh Lamhfada has come to the gates of Tara, and every art which doth help thy people, he practiceth them all, so that he is the man of each and every art."

Therefore Nuada ordained that they should bring forth to Lugh the chess-boards of Tara, and when the chess-boards were placed before him, Lugh won every game that was played against him. When Nuada learned of this, he demanded that Lugh be admitted to his court saying "A man such as this has never before entered into this fortress."

Then did the gatekeeper bid him enter, and he went into the fortress, and he sat in the seat of the Ollamh, and was proclaimed an Ildánach, that is to say, a master of all arts. Whereupon Oghma lifted up the Stone of Fal, which required fourscore yoke of oxen to move it, and did throw it through the side of the hall so that it lay outside upon the ground of Tara. This was to challenge Lugh, who tossed the stone back so that it lay in the centre of the royal court; and he threw the piece which it had carried away back into the side of the hall so that it was made whole again.

Then said the hosts, "Let a harp be played for us," Whereupon Lugh played soothing music for the hosts and for the king so that they were lulled to sleep, and they lay in a deep slumber from that night until the same hour and time the night thereafter. And when they awoke he played mournful tunes so that they all wept and lamented. Then he played cheerful strains so that they were glad and rejoiced.

And when Nuadu had seen the warrior's many powers, he considered whether Lugh could release the Tuatha Dé Danann from the bondage they suffered at the hands of the Fomoraig. So they assembled in council to discuss the warrior, and the decision which Nuadu reached was to exchange seats with Lugh; whereby Lugh went to the king's seat, and the king rose up before him till thirteen days had ended. Then on the morrow he met with the two brothers, Dagda and Oghma, and with his kinsmen Goibniu and Diancecht who were summoned to them.

For a year and a day they held forth in a secret council at Grellach Dollaid, whenceforth that place was called 'The Whisper of the Tuatha Dé Danann'. And when the council was adjourned they all agreed to meet again on that same day three years thence. Whereupon Lugh did return once more to Tir fo Thonn, to seek provisions of war from his foster-father Manannan son of Lir.

Three years thereafter Nuada did again summon forth unto him all the Druids of Ireland, and the healers and charioteers and smiths and farmers and law-givers and they held themselves in secret council upon the Hill of Uisnech. And Nuada asked of the Fáith whose name was Mathgen what power he did wield? And Mathgen answered that by his incantations he would lay low the mountains of Ireland upon the Fomoraig, and tumble their summits upon the ground. And he declared to them that the twelve highest peaks in Ireland would aid the Tuatha De Danann in their battle,

namely, Sliab League, and Denna Ulad and the Mourne Mountains, and Bri Ruri and Sliab Bladma and Sliab Snechtai, Sliab Mis and Blisliab and Nevin and Sliab Maccu Belgadan and Segals and Cruachan Aigle.

Then Nuada asked the cupbearer what power he could yield. He answered that he would bring the twelve chief loughs of Ireland before the Fomoraig, and that they would not find water therein, whatever thirst might seize them, meaning the lough of Derglough, Lough Luimnigh, Lough Corrib, Lough Ree, Lough Mask, Strangford Lough, Belfast Lough, Lough Neagh, Lough Foyle, Lough Gara, Lough Reag, and Marlough. They would betake themselves to the twelve chief rivers of Ireland, which are the Bush, Boyne, Baa, Nem, Lee, Shannon, Moy, Sligo, Erne, Finn, Liffey, Sui; and these would all be hidden from the Fomoraig, so that they will not find a drop therein, yet drink shall be provided for the men of Ireland, though they bide in the battle to the end of seven years.

Then said Figol son of Matmos, the Druid, "I will cause three showers of fire to rain down upon the faces of the Fomoraig host, and I will reduce their valor and their bravery and their strength to a third of what it formerly had been, and I will bind their bladders in their own bodies and in the bodies of their horses. Every breath that the men of Ireland release will be an increase in valor and bravery and strength to them even though they bide in the battle till the end of seven years, they will not in any wise grow weary." Whereupon Dagda spoke before the council saying "The power of which ye boast I shall wield it all by myself." And then all the company enjoined in saying, "Dagda, thou art a good hand to everyone!"

And while the Tuatha Dé Danann were gathered before Nuada in council atop the Hill of Uisneach they beheld a strange company of warriors approaching them from the east, over the plain; and at its head there was a young man who held command over the host, and the brightness of his face was like that of the setting sun, so that they were not able to look upon him because of its brightness. Yet when he drew nearer they saw that it was Lugh Lamhfada who had returned unto them from Emhain Abhlach, bringing with him foster-brothers, the sons of Manannan, who were named Sgoith Gleigeil, 'the White Flower'; and Goitne Gorm-Shuileach, 'the Blue-eyed Spear'; and Sine Sindearg, of the Red Ring; and Donall Donn-Ruadh, of the Auburn Hair.

And Lugh rode forth upon Manannan's horse, Aonbharr of the One Mane, that was as swift as the cold naked wind of springtime, and to her the sea was the same as dry land; and whoever rode upon her could not be killed as long as they remained on her back. And Lugh had Manannan's breast-plate on him, that protected whoever wore it from all wounds; and a helmet upon his head that shone with two brilliant gems set into the front of it and

one at the back, and when he removed it, his forehead was like the sun on a dry summer day. At his side Lugh carried Manannan's sword, Freagarthach 'the Answerer'; no one that was wounded by it could survive, and when it was bared in a battle, no man that saw it coming against him had any more strength than a woman in child-birth.

And the troop came forth unto the assembly of Nuada and they welcomed each other; but not long thereafter they saw approach a surly, slovenly band, nine times nine in number, who were the messengers of the Fomoraig. They had come forth to claim taxes and tribute from the men of Ireland. And they were led by the four among them that were the hardest and the most cruel, whose names were Eine, Eathfaigh, Coron and Compar. Of them the Tuatha De Danann held such great dread that not one of them would so much as punish his own son or foster-son without leave from them.

As they approached the place where Nuada had assembled his council, the king and all the Tuatha Dé Danann stood up before them. And Lugh reproached them, saying: "Why dost thou rise up before that surly, slovenly troop, when thou didst not rise up before us?" Whereupon Nuada replied "It is needful for us to do it, for if there was even a child of our people who sat before them and did not rise up, they would think themselves justified in killing him." To which Lugh responded "By my word, there is a great desire coming on me to kill all of them." But Nuada sought to discourage him, saying "That is a thing that would bring harm upon us, for we would meet our own death and destruction through it."

Then Lugh declared "For too long hast thou lived under this oppression!" Whereupon he charged at the Fomoraig, attacking them with such fury that he did not quit until all but nine of them lay dead, and these he let go under the protection of Nuada the king, saying "I would kill thee along with the rest, were it not that I would sooner see thou goeth to thine own country with my message than have my people carry word of thy deaths thence, knowing that they would not be well treated."

Thereupon the nine Fomoraig went back unto Lochlann, where their king did dwell, and they told him the story from beginning to end, of how a handsome young warrior had come forth into Ireland and had killed all the tax-gatherers save for themselves, that they might tell him the story in their own words. On hearing this Balor asked if they knew who the man was that had done this. Then Balor's wife Cethlinn spoke and said "I know well, for he is the son of your daughter and mine. It has been foretold that from the time he would come forth into Ireland, we would never have power over that country again forever."

The chief men of the Fomoraig then held council; Eab son of Neid, and Seanchab the grandson of Neid; and Sital Salmhor, and the Druid Lobais,

along with Liath his son; and the nine Ollamain of the Fomoraig who possessed knowledge and the gift prophecy, and Balor himself, together with his queen, Ceithlenn of the Crooked Teeth, and their twelve white-mouthed sons.

And it was at this time that Bres and his father Elatha had come to ask help from Balor, and Bres said "I will go myself to Ireland, and will take with me seven great legions of the Fomoraig, and I will make battle with Lugh the Ildánach, this master of all arts, wherefore I shall strike off his head and bring it forth to you, upon the green of Berbhe." And the Fomoraig enjoined him saying "It would be a fitting thing for you to do." Then did Bres command "Let my ships be made ready for me and let food and provisions be put therein."

Without delay, were the ships made ready, and food and drink aplenty were put therein, and the two swift Luaths were sent forth to gather an army for Bres. And when they had all been gathered, they prepared their armor and their weapons, whereupon they set out for Ireland.

And Balor their king followed the Fomoraig to the harbor, and as they departed he said unto them, "Give battle to Lugh, and strike off his head; and tie the island that is called Ireland to the back of your ships, and tow it hither to the northern part of Lochlann, so that there be only sea where it once stood; and not one man among the Tuatha Dé Danann will follow it here to the end of all time."

Then the army of the Fomoraig set sail in their longboats, leaving behind the harbor and putting up their painted sails on the open waters of the broad sea; never veering from their course until they came upon the shores of Ireland at the harbor of Eas Dara. And from there they sent forth their army through West Connacht and destroyed it altogether. And the King of Connacht at that time was Bodb Dearg, son of Dagda.

chapter ten

the quest of the sons of tuíreann

Now Lugh Lamhfada was in Tara with Nuada the king of the Tuatha Dé Danann, when word came to him that the Fomoraig had come ashore at Eas Dara. And when he learned of this, he made ready Manannan's horse, the Aonbharr, and rode forth to west Connacht and saw the destruction thereof; whereby he returned to the court of Nuada and told the king of how the Formoraig had landed at Eas Dara and had laid waste to Bodb Derg's country. And Lugh entreated Nuada, saying "Lend me thine aid, that we may do battle with them."

But Nuada was not of a mind to avenge the wrong that was done on Bodb Dearg, nor upon himself and Lugh was greatly displeased with Nuada's answer; whereupon he went riding westward out of Tara. And presently he perceived three armed men approaching him, his own father Cian together with Cian's two brothers, Goibniu and Samthainn, and they hailed him, saying "What is the cause of thy early rising?" Lugh replied "I have good reason for it, as the Formoraig have come forth to Ireland and have robbed Bodb Derg; therefore in what wise will you assist me against them?"

And their answer to Lugh was "Each of us will fend off a hundred of the Fomoraig from you in the battle!" But Lugh said to them "That would be a great help indeed, but there is another favor I would have you grant unto me

rather than that. Go forth and gather unto me the Tuatha Dé Danann from every place wherever they may be.”

Then did Goibniu and Samthainn head towards the south, and Cian set out for the north; and he did not quit his journey until he reached the Plain of Meath. And lo, even as he crossed the plain, Cian saw three armed men before him, who were Brian, Iuchar, and Iucharba, the three sons of Tuireann. Now great was the hatred and enmity that they held towards Cian and his brothers, so that whenever they met, violence was sure to come between them.

Cian said unto himself, “Were my two brothers with me, it is a brave fight that we would make; but being that they are not, it is best that my presence go unnoticed.” Seeing a large herd of pigs near him, he struck himself with a Druid’s wand and assumed the likeness of a pig, and did go amongst the herd, whereby he began rooting up the ground like unto the rest.

Then Brian said to his brothers, “Didst thou see that armed churl walking forth upon the plain just now?” And they answered him saying “We did see him.” Whereupon Brian entreated, “Dost thou knoweth what it was that took him away?” But Iuchar and Iucharba replied “We knoweth not.”

Therefore Brian admonished them, saying “It is a pity that thou keepeth not a better watch upon the plains of the open country in time of war. I knoweth well what happened to him, for he did strike himself with a Druid’s wand and thereby did take the shape of a pig amongst yon herd, and he is there rooting up the ground even now, like unto any one of them; therefore am I certain that he is no friend to us.” Whereupon Brian’s brothers said “That is bad for us, as these pigs belong to one of the Tuatha Dé Danann, and though we should kill them all, the enchanted pig may by chance escape us in the end.”

Whereupon Brian exclaimed, “Poorly didst thou receive thy wisdom in the city of learning, that thou canst not discern an enchanted beast from a natural beast.” And as he spoke Brian struck his two brothers with the same Druid’s wand, thereby turning them into a pair of quick and slender hounds, and they began to yelp sharply on the track of the enchanted pig.

Soon thereafter the pig took off running away from the rest of the herd, and not one among the others ran, but only itself; and as it came to the edge of a wood, Brian threw his spear at the pig, and it went through its body. And the pig cried out and said, “Tis is an ill thing that thou hast done to cast thy spear upon me when thou knowest me.” Then did Brian say, “It dost seem to me that thou hast the speech of a man.” And the pig answered him, saying, “I was a man indeed, for I am Cian, who thou knowest well; give thy aid unto me now.” But Brian refused him, saying, “I swear by the gods of the air, that if the life came back seven times unto thee I would take it from thee each time.”

Then said Cian, "If that be so, grant me but one request. Let me return into my own shape again." Brian agreed to this, saying, "We will do that, for it is easier to me to kill a man than a pig." Whereupon Cian returned to his own shape and said, "Grant me mercy now." But Brian refused, telling him, "We will not give it." Then did Cian declare, "Better is it that thou should kill me now, for if thou killed me in the shape of a pig, there would only be the blood money of a pig paid for me; but as thou wilt kill me in my own shape, a heavier fine has never been paid for the sake of any person than will be paid for killing me. And the weapons that I am slain with will tell the deed to my son."

Therefore Brian did say, "It is not with weapons that we shall kill thee, but with the stones that lieth upon the ground." Whereupon they began to strike him with stones, smiting him with great force, until there was nothing left of him but a bloody, wretched, broken heap; and they buried him the depth of a man's body in the earth. But lo, the earth would not receive their murder, and it cast his body forth again.

Seeing this, Brian told his brothers to bury the body of Cian again; and they put it in the earth a second time, yet still the earth would not receive it. Six times did the sons of Tuireann bury the body, and six times it was cast forth therefrom; but the seventh time it was put into the ground the earth received it. Then they went forth to join Lugh Lamhfada in battle against the Fomoraig.

Now when Lugh parted with his father he went forth from Tara headed west, to the hills of Gairech and Ilgairech, and crossing the river Shannon at the ford of Athluain, he passed through the gap of Bearna nah-Eadargana, and across the plain of Mag Luirg, and to Corr Slieve na Seaghsa, thence to the head of Sean-Slieve, and through the place of the bright-faced Corann, and from there to Mag Mor an Aonaigh, where the Fomoraig were, and the spoils of Connacht with them.

And when Bres son of Elatha perceived Lugh's approach, he rose up and said: "It is a wonder to me that the sun is rising in the west today, though it riseth in the east every other day." Then did his Druids declare "Better for us were it the sun!" Wherefore Bres asked of them "What else is it?" And the Druids replied "It is the shining face of Lugh, son of Ethniu."

When Lugh came upon them he saluted them, at which they did wonder, saying, "Why dost thou come forth as friend to us?" And Lugh answered, "I have good reason for that, as but half of me is of the Tuatha Dé Danann, and the other half is of the Fomoraig. Give back unto me now the milk cows of the men of Ireland." But angry was the reply they made, saying, "Good luck is not upon thee, as thou shall get neither a dry cow nor a milk cow from us this day or any other!"

For three days and three nights Lugh made camp near the Fomoraig, and at the end of that time the Tuatha Dé Danann came unto him. Bodb Derg son of Dagda came bringing twenty-nine hundred men with him, and he did ask, "What is the cause of thy delay in giving battle?" And Lugh replied, "I was waiting for thee to arrive."

Then did the kings and the chief men of Ireland put on their armor, and they lifted up the points of their spears over their heads, and they made close walls with their shields. Whereupon they attacked the Fomoraig on Mag Mor an Aonaigh, and their enemies retaliated, and they threw their singing spears at one another, and when their spears were broken they drew forth their swords from their blue-edged sheaths and began to strike at each other, and the dust of the battlefield rose above them from the bitterness of their conflict.

And Lugh discovered the battle-hold where Bres son of Elatha was, and he made a fierce attack upon him and on the men that were guarding him until he had killed no less than two hundred of them. When Bres saw that, he gave himself up to Lugh's protection, saying, "Grant me my life this day and I will bring forth the whole Fomoraig race to fight against thee in a great battle until the very end; and I bind myself to that, by the sun and the moon, the sea and the land."

Whereupon Lugh did spare his life, then did the Druids that accompanied Bres also ask of Lugh's protection for themselves, so that Lugh said, "By my word, if the whole race of the Fomoraig came under my protection, they would not be slain by me." Thereby did Bres and his Druids escape, so that they went forth and returned to their own country.

After the battle of Mag Mor an Aonaigh, Lugh came upon two of his kinsmen and did ask of them whether they had seen his father in the fight. "We did not," said they. And Lugh declared, "Certain am I that he lives no more, and I give my word that I shall neither eat nor drink until I discover by what means my father died."

Then Lugh went forth, and Tuatha Dé Danann with him, until they came unto the place where he and his father last parted from one another, and from there they came upon the site where Lugh's father transformed himself into the shape of a pig when he saw the sons of Tuireann. And when Lugh came unto that place, the stones of the ground cried out to him, and said, "Great was the danger thy father faced here, O Lugh, when he saw the sons of Tuireann before him, and it was into the shape of a pig that he went, but in his own shape did they slay him."

Whereupon Lugh related what he heard to his companions, and they found the place where his father was buried, and Lugh bade them to dig up his grave, so that he might discover by what means the sons of Tuireann

had brought death upon him. And when the body of Cian had been raised forth from the ground they looked upon it and saw that it was all one mass of wounds, so that Lugh declared, "It was the death of an enemy the sons of Tuireann gave to my beloved father."

And Lugh placed three kisses upon Cian's body, saying, "It is in a bad way that I find myself after this death, for I can neither hear with my ears, nor can I see with my eyes, nor is there a living pulse in my heart, so greatly do I grieve after my father. By all the gods, it is a pity that I did not come here when this thing was done. It is a terrible thing that has been done here, that the Tuatha Dé Danann have done treachery upon one another, and for long will they suffer because of it and be diminished by it. And Ireland shall never be free from troubles from this day forth, east or west!"

Then they returned Cian's body unto the earth once more, thenceforth there was great keening made over his grave, and a stone was raised above it, and his name was written in ogham letters thereupon. And Lugh said, "This hill shall take its name from Cian, though he himself is stripped and broken; and it was the sons of Tuireann who did this thing, therefore will grief and anguish fall upon them for it, and on their children after them. Truly do I speak unto thee, for I am in a pitiful way, and my heart is broken in my chest since brave Cian, my father, lives no more."

Lugh told his companions to go ahead of him to Tara, but he bid them "Do not speak of what has happened here until I can tell of it myself." And when Lugh came to Tara, he sat in the high seat of the king, and he looked about him and he saw the three sons of Tuireann. And they surpassed all others in Tara at that time in quickness and skill, and strength in battle, and in beauty and an honorable name.

Lugh then told his people to shake the chain of silence, and so they did, and all listened. Wherefore Lugh spoke unto them, saying, "What dost thou think upon, O Tuatha Dé Danann?" And they did answer, "It is on thyself we thinketh." Thereupon Lugh said "I have a question to ask of thee. What is the vengeance each one of thee would take upon a man who would kill thy father?"

When they heard what Lugh had asked them, they were taken aback; then did one of the chief men among them say, "Tell us, is it thy own father who has been killed?" And Lugh answered him, saying, "Indeed it was, and even now I see standing before me in this place the very men who did kill him, and they doth know, better than I myself, by what means they did slay him."

Whereupon Nuada declared, "Were it my own father who had been slain, I would not swiftly put to death the man who did that deed; but were his life in my hands, each day I would cut from him one of his limbs until at last I brought an end to him." Then did every man who was gathered there in that assembly say the same, even the sons of Tuireann like unto all the rest.

Seeing this, Lugh said, "The three men who killed my father stand amongst thee in agreement, therefore let them now pay the price for his murder before all here assembled. And if they will not, though I shall in no wise deny them the protection of Nuada's throne, they must not go forth from his court until they have settled with me." Then Nuada spake, saying, "Were it I myself who had slain thy father, content would I be to render unto you a fine for his death."

Hearing this, the sons of Tuireann whispered amongst themselves, "It is unto us that Lugh is directing his words," Iuchar and Iucharba said to their brother, "let us confess the murder of his father unto him." But Brian cautioned them, saying, "I fear that by his hearing our confession before this council that he will not be satisfied thereafter to receive only the fine rendered unto him." But still Iuchar and Iucharba implored Brian "Better is it that we should confess to this and you, being the eldest, should speak for all three of us."

Whereupon Brian arose and spoke before the assembly, saying, "It is to us that thou speaketh, O Lugh, for thou thinkest that we have gone against Cian and his brothers ere now, though we didst not slay thy father; but we will pay the fine for his death all the same as if we had slain him." And Lugh did answer him, saying "I will take from you a fine that you have yet to consider, and I will here declare what it shall be, and if you think it too great, I will waive a portion of it."

Contemplating Lugh's words, Brian said unto him, "Tell us then what fine thou wouldst have us render unto thee." Then Lugh told him, saying, "Your fine shall be this: three apples, the skin of a pig, a spear, two horses, a chariot, seven pigs, a dog's whelp, a cooking-spit, and three shouts upon a hill; and if this be more than you can render unto me, a portion thereof will I waiver, but if thou dost not deem it too great, then render these things unto me."

And when he heard all that Lugh sought of them, Brian said unto him, "It is not too great that which thou asketh of us; nay even were it a hundred times greater, still it would not be more than we could accomplish. Yet, for the smallness thereof, we deemest thou likely intendeth some treachery towards us by what thou asketh." But Lugh assured them, saying "I dost not think it too small a fine, and I giveth the assurance of the Tuatha Dé Danann that I shall ask no other thing of thee, and I vow to be faithful in my word, whereby thou should giveth the same pledge unto me." Then Brian replied unto Lugh, saying, "A pity is it that thou feelest the need to ask that, for our word is as good as any pledge in the world."

Yet Lugh made clear his doubts of their character, saying, "Thine own pledge is not sufficient, for often dost the likes of thee promise to fulfill an obligation in this way, but will seek to escape from the same

thereafter.” Thereupon the sons of Tuireann bound themselves by the King of Ireland, and by Bodb Dearg, son of the Dagda, and by the chief men of the Tuatha Dé Danann, that they would render unto Lugh all that he sought of them.

Then did Lugh say unto the sons of Tuireann, “It would be well now for me to give thee better knowledge of the fine.” And they said to him, “It would be well indeed.” So Lugh said, “This then is the way of it; the three apples I asked of thee are three apples from the Garden of Hesperides in the East of the World, and no other apples will do but these, for of all the apples in the world they are the fairest and have the most virtue in them, being the color of burnished gold, and of a size like unto the head of a month old child; tasting of honey and having the power to relieve the pain of wounds and the misery of sickness from anyone who eats thereof; and no matter how much of them is eaten, their size is never diminished.

“And the skin I asked of thee,” said Lugh, “is the pig skin of Tuis, the King of Greece, for it heals all wounds and cures every sickness in the world, and no matter how grave the danger a man may be in, even were it able to take his life, it will cure him; for it was the way of that pig that every stream of water it would pass through would be turned into wine, even to the end of nine days thereafter, and every wound it touched was healed; and the philosophers of Greece saith, that it is not in the pig itself that this virtue was, but in its skin, therefore they skinned it, and the skin hath remained there ever since. And I think it shall be with great difficulty that thou mayest get it, with or without the consent of that king.

“The spear I am asking of thee is a formidable poisoned weapon owned by Pisear the King of Persia, Aredbair is it called, and every desirable thing may be accomplished by it, yet its head must be steeped in a vessel of water, to prevent it from burning down the place wherein it is kept; and it also will be very hard to obtain.

“The two horses and chariot I am asking of thee are the chariot and the two wonderful steeds of Dobair, King of Siogair. To them the sea is like unto the land; no horses in all the world are faster than they, and there is no chariot equal to that one in design or strength.

“The seven pigs that I asked of thee are the pigs of Easal, King of the Golden Pillars; and though they are killed each night, they are found alive on the morrow, and no disease or sickness can befall any person that will eat a portion of them.

“The whelp that I asked of thee is Fail-Inis, the whelp belonging to the King of Ioruaidh, the cold country. All the wild beasts of the world fall down at the sight of her, and she is more beautiful than the sun in his fiery chariot, and it will be hard indeed to obtain her.

“The cooking-spit I asked of thee is a spit belonging to the women of Inis Cenn-fhinne, the Island of fair-haired Caer. And the three shouts upon a hill thou art to give must be made on Miochaoin’s hill, in the north of Lochlann, though Miochaoin and his sons are under bonds not to allow any shouts to be made upon that hill; and from them my father received his learning. Even were I to forgive thee for his death, they would not forgive thee. And should you succeed in all your other voyages ere you reach them, I believe that they themselves will avenge his death upon you. And that is the fine I have asked of thee,” said Lugh.

When the sons of Tuireann heard this, a dark silence fell over them, and they went forth to where their father was, and told him of the fine that Lugh had imposed upon them. And when he heard what it was, Tuireann said to his sons, “Bad tidings are these, for it will be to thy death and destruction that thou wilt be going in search of those things. Moreover, if Lugh hath a mind to help thee, thou might fulfill thine obligations, though all the men of the world could not do it, excepting by the power of Manannan, or of Lugh himself.

“Go then and ask from Lugh the loan of Manannan’s horse, the Aonbharr, for if he hath any desire to collect the fine, he will give it to thee; but if he dost not wish it, he will say that as the horse is not his own, he will not loan that which has been lendd unto him. Ask then from him the loan of Manannan’s boat, the Scuabtuinne, ‘the Wave Sweeper’, and he will giveth that, for he is under bonds not to refuse a second request, and the boat is better for thee than the horse,” said Tuireann.

So the Sons of Tuireann went forth to where Lugh was, and they hailed him, saying that they could not render unto him the fine without his own help, and for that reason it would be expeditious if he would lend them the Aonbharr. But Lugh refused them, saying, “That horse is but loaned to me itself, and I will not lend that which I myself have borrowed.”

Then said Brian, “If that be so, give us the loan of Manannan’s boat.” To this Lugh agreed, saying, “I will give that.” Whereupon the sons of Tuireann asked, “Where is it to be found?” And Lugh told them that it was at Brug na Boyne. So they returned again to their father, and their sister Ethne was with him. And they told Tuireann that they had obtained the boat; but Tuireann said, “Not much better wilt thou be for having it, though Lugh would be greatly pleased to get every part of this fine, for he could make good use of it in battle against the Formoraig; but he would like as well for thee to come to thy deaths seeking it.”

Thereupon they departed, leaving Tuireann lamenting in great anguish, and their sister Ethne went with them to Brug na Boyne where the boat was kept. When Brian got into it, he began to find fault with its narrowness,

saying, "There is scarcely room enough for but one other person besides myself here." And his sister said unto him, "Thou shouldst not blame the boat, dear brother, for ill was the deed thou hast done in killing the father of Lugh Lamhfada; and whatever scaith may come to thee from it, thou dost deserveth it." But her brothers reproached her, saying, "Do not speak of that, Ethne, for we are in good heart, and brave deeds will we do; and better would it be to die a hundred deaths than to suffer a coward's end." Ethne replied, "Grief is upon me, for there is naught more sorrowful than seeing thee driven forth from thy own country."

Then the three sons of Tuireann pushed the boat of Manannan out upon the open waters from the fair shores of Ireland. And once they were afloat, Iuchar and Iucharba asked Brian, "What course shall we take to begin our quest?" to which their brother replied, "We shall go forth in search of the apples, as they were the first thing we were bade to bring. Therefore we ask of thee, O boat of Manannan, that lies beneath us, to sail unto the Garden of Hesperides in the East of the World."

And the boat obeyed Brian's command, and it sailed forth over the green-faceted waves and deep places until it came unto a harbor in the East of the World. Whereupon Brian asked his brothers, "By what means dost thou think we mayest gain entry into the garden? For, I deem that it is ever guarded by the champions and warriors of this country, by command of their king."

Hearing this, Iuchar and Iucharba asked Brian, "What else can we do but to go straight at them and attack them, so that we either take the apples or fall ourselves, as we can in no wise escape from these dangers that lie before us without meeting our death in some place." Then said Brian, "It would be better if the story of our bravery and cunning be told and live on after us, than for a tale of folly and cowardice be told of us; and the best thing for us to do now is to go in the shape of swift hawks into the garden, as the guardians of it have only their light spears to throw at us, therefore, take good care to stay out of their reach, and once they have thrown all their spears, make a quick flight to the apples where each of thee should bring forth an apple in thy talons, and I shall bring away the third."

Agreeing to this, Brian struck his two brothers and himself with a Druid's wand, and they were changed into beautiful hawks, whereby they flew towards the garden, and the guardians thereof took notice of them and shouted on every side of them, and threw showers of spears and darts, but the hawks kept out of their reach as Brian had bade them, till all the spears were spent, and then they swept down bravely on the apples, and brought them away with them, without so much as a wound.

Then did the word go forth throughout the city and the whole province that three enchanted hawks had taken the apples. Now the king had three

wise and cunning daughters, and when they learned of the theft of the apples, they transformed themselves into the likeness of three ospreys, whereupon they did follow the hawks unto the sea, casting bolts of lightning before and after them, which did singe their feathers badly, so that the sons of Tuireann exclaimed, "Pitiful is our plight, for we shall be burned completely by this lightning if we do not somehow escape."

Then Brian said unto his brothers "If I can help us to escape I will do it." And with that he struck himself and his brothers with the Druid wand, and they were turned into three swans that swiftly descended into the sea, whereby the ospreys left them alone and returned unto their father, the king, and the sons of Tuireann went to their boat.

Thereafter they spoke amongst one another as to where they would journey next, and they decided to go forth to Greece and bring away the skin of the pig, either by loan or by theft. So they sailed until they came unto to land of Greece, and as they drew near the court of the King of Greece, Brian asked of his brothers, "What guise should we assume having now come to this place?" Then did Iuchar and Iucharba say to him, "Why should we be seen in any appearance besides our own?" Whereupon Brian answered them, saying, "I think it best that we be not seen in our own forms, but rather we should go forth in the guise of Bards from Ireland, so that the chiefs of Greece might thereby hold us in respect and in honor."

But Iuchar and Iucharba said, "It would be difficult for us to do that, as we are without verse, and have little knowledge of such art." Nevertheless, they tied their hair in the Bard's knot and went forth unto the court of the King of Greece where they knocked upon the door of his court. Then did the door-keeper come forth and ask who they were, so that Brian told him, "We are Bards of Ireland and we have come with a poem for the king."

When the king was told that bards from Ireland had called upon his court, he said unto the door-keeper, "Bid them enter, for they seek a goodly patron to have come so far from their own country." And orders were given that everything in his court should be displayed to its best advantage so that the strangers would say that they had never seen such a grand place in all their travels.

Then the sons of Tuireann were welcomed into the king's court, in the guise of Bards, whereby they soon began drinking and carousing, thinking that in all the world they had never seen a court so gracious, nor a household so grand, nor a place where they had received any greater welcome.

Then did the king's poets rise to perform their songs and verses. Wherefore Brian son of Tuireann bade his brothers to recite a poem for the king, but they protested, saying, "We know not any poem except to take what we have come for by the might of our strength, or else to fall at the hands of those

who oppose us if they prove victorious, therefore ask us not for any other recitation.” Then Brian answered them, saying “Such as that makes for a very poor poem indeed.” And with that he arose asking to be heard, whereupon all did listen unto him, as he did say:

“O Tuis, we hideth not from thy fame
We praise thee as the oak among kings;
The skin of a pig, bounty without hardship,
This is the reward I ask for it.
The war of a neighbor against an ear;
The fair ear of his neighbor will be against him;
He who gives us what he owns,
His court will not be diminished for it.
A raging army and a sudden sea
Are a danger to whoever goes against them.
The skin of a pig, bounty without hardship,
This is the reward I ask, O Tuis.”

When Brian had finished, the king said unto him, “That is a fine poem, though I do not understand a word of its meaning.” Then Brian did say “I will tell thee its meaning; ‘O Tuis, we hideth not from thy fame; we praise thee as the oak among the kings.’ That is to say, as the oak is the greatest among all the kingly trees of the wood, so thou art above all other kings of the world in graciousness and grandeur. ‘The skin of a pig, bounty without hardship.’ That is, the skin of the pig that thou ownest is what I would wish to get from thee as a reward for my poem. ‘The war of a neighbor against an ear, the fair ear of his neighbor will be against him.’ That is, thou and I shall wrestle over the skin by its ears, unless I obtain it by thy consent; and that is the meaning of the poem,” said Brian.

Then did the king say unto Brian, “I would praise thy poem, but for there being so much said about my pig-skin in it; and thou lacketh good wits, man of poetry, to seek it from me, for I would not give it to all the poets, nor the sages, nor the greatest men of the world, nor could they take it away without my consent. But I will give unto thee three times the fill of its skin in gold as the price of thy poem.”

Whereupon Brian replied, “May goodness abideth with thee, O king; for well I did know that it should be no small matter what I asked, but rather that I might receive great treasure in its stead; so highly doth I covet it. Yet I shall not be satisfied unless I see the gold measured into the skin myself.”

The king then sent forth his servants together with the sons of Tuireann unto his treasure-house to measure out the gold. And when they had entered

therein, Brian said to the king's servants, "Give unto each of my brothers the full measure of the skin first, and thereafter give good measure to myself, being as it was I who composed the poem."

But lo, when the skin was brought out, Brian did hastily lay hold of it by his left hand, while with his right he drew forth his sword and with a mighty swing of his blade he did cut in half the man nearest him. Then, taking up the skin, he put it about himself, whereby he and his brothers rushed out of the court, cutting down every armed man that came before them, so that not one escaped death or injury. Then did Brian enter into the chamber of the king himself, so that the king took up arms against him, and they fiercely fought one another, until at length the King of Greece did fall by the hand of Brian son of Tuireann.

Having rested from their struggle to gain the pig-skin, the sons of Tuireann returned again to their boat. There Brian said to his brothers, "Let us go forth unto the court of Pisear, the King of Persia, and ask him for the spear," to which Iuchar and Iucharba replied, "We have done well to obtain the apples and the skin." Thenceforth they departed upon the blue-green waters of the Aegean, stopping nowhere until they arrived at the border of Persia.

And when they came into that country, the sons of Tuireann contemplated by what means they should take the spear from the king, whereupon Brian said, "Let us go unto the court of Pisear under the guise of Bards, even as we appeared unto the King of Greece." To which his brothers agreed, saying, "In such wise are we content seeing as all ended well before when took to poetry; though it were not with ease for us to follow a calling that does not belong to us."

Whenceforth they did tie their hair in a Bard's knot and went unto the court of Pisear where they were as well received as they had been at the court of Tuis; and when the king asked of them a poem Brian arose, and made his recitation, saying:

"Barely doth any spear look unto Pisear;
The assaults of his enemies are defeated,
With ease Pisear shall cut down each one of them.
The yew, most beautiful of all woods,
Is called the King, slender is its form.
The spear shall impale entire armies with fatal wounding."

When Brian had finished, the king spoke unto him and said, "A goodly poem thou hast given, but I knoweth not why thou hast brought such mention of my spear into it, O Bard of Ireland." Then did Brian answer the

king, saying, "It is because I desire to receive the spear as payment for my poem." But Pisear did protest against Brian's suggestion, telling him, "Thou art a man of little mind to ask such a thing of me! Never hath the men of my court shewn such respect for poetry to not put thee to death where thou standeth!"

And when Brian had heard the words which the king had spoken, his mind fell upon the apple that he held in his hand, and with one sure toss he flung it at Pisear, striking him upon his forehead so mightily that the king's brains burst forth from the back of his head; whereupon Brian drew his sword and slew the king's attendants who challenged him, and his brothers did likewise until they had slain every man of Pisear's court. Thenceforth the sons of Tuireann found Aredbair, the king's spear, with its head placed in a cauldron of water to keep it from setting the palace ablaze, and they carried it away with them.

Thereafter having rested from their adventure, they took counsel to determine where next they should go, and Brian did say, "Let us go unto the king of the Isle of Siogair who possesses the two steeds and the chariot which Lugh hath demanded of us." To which his brothers agreed, and so they set out on their journey bringing with them all that they had taken thus far.

And when the sons of Tuireann had come to the court of the King of Siogair, Brian said unto his brothers, "This time we shall go in the guise of mercenaries from Ireland, whereby we shall win the confidence of the king so that we may discover the place where his horses and chariot are kept." To this Iuchar and Iucharba agreed, and they went unto the gates of the palace of the king. Upon their entering the palace, the king and the chief men of his court arose, whereupon the sons of Tuireann saluted him. The king bid them tell who they were and what was their business. Brian said unto him, "We are soldiers of fortune from Ireland and we seek hire from the rulers of the kingdoms of the world.

When the king heard their answer he asked, "Dost thou wish to serve as warriors of my kingdom?" To which the brothers replied, "That is our desire." And thereafter they entered into an agreement to serve under the king. For six weeks they abided in the court of the king without ever seeing his horses, so that they grew discontent with the progress of their scheme; thus Brian did say one day unto his brothers, "We have accomplished naught for all our time in the king's service, for we have yet to discover where his steeds and chariot are kept." Iuchar despaired and said, "Yea, we knoweth no more of them now than we did upon the first day of our coming to this place." And Iucharba entreated, "Indeed, but what is to be done?" Whereupon Brian said unto them, "Let us gather our arms and the other treasures and go forth to the king and tell him that lest he show us his horses we shall take leave of his kingdom and depart from Siogair."

And they went forth that very day unto the king having gathered their weapons and other things, so that on seeing them the king asked what reason had they in preparing for a journey. Brian answered him saying, "I will tell thee, O King, it is for the reason that warriors of Ireland such as ourselves have always been trusted by those to whom we render service, so that we are accustomed to know the secrets of those we guard; but thou hast yet to show us thy trust. For thou haveth in thy possession a pair of steeds and a chariot the like of which are unequaled in all the world, as has been told to us; yet we have never been shown them."

Then said the king to the sons of Tuireann, "A pity it would be for thee to leave on that account, for I would gladly have shown them to thee on the very day that thou first came to my kingdom. If thou desirest, I will shew them to thee even now; for never hath any soldiers of Ireland come to Siogair who were more admired by myself and my people than thyselfes."

Thenceforth the king sent for his horses and they were yoked to the chariot, and they rode forth as swiftly as the cold sharp winds of spring, and the waters of the seas were no different to them than the firm sod of dry land. And as the steeds were passing; Brian suddenly took hold of the chariot and cast the driver out throwing him hard against a rock and took the reigns himself. Then Brian threw the spear called Aredbair at the King of Siogair so that it went straight through his heart, and the people of the king were scattered by the sons of Tuireann, so that they made off with his horses and chariot.

When they had left the Isle of Siogair, Brian said to his brothers, "Let us go now to the court of Easal, King of the Golden Pillars, to find the seven swine we are bound to bring unto Lugh." So they sailed on without delay until they came to the shores of that high country. And the people of that land were watching over their harbors lest they should be visited by the sons of Tuireann, for word had come to them that these brothers had been compelled to leave Ireland on pains of death, and that they had been making off with all the greatest treasures of the world.

Therefore Easal himself came unto the harbor to meet them, and he did ask the sons of Tuireann if what was said of them was true; for it had been related that the rulers of each kingdom they had journeyed to had fallen by their hands. Brian answered him saying that it was so, giving no regard as to what Easal might have done with them for it. And when Easal heard this he asked why they were compelled to do so, whereupon Brian said that they were bound to do so in order to render a harsh fine which had been imposed upon them by another, and he revealed all that had come to pass and how they had put down all those who stood in opposition to them up to that time.

And when he had heard their story, Easal asked, "What bringest thou to my kingdom, O sons of Tuireann?" To which Brian gave the answer, "We

have come for the seven swine belonging to thee.” Then asked the king: “How dost thou mean to take them?” And Brian said, “If thou wouldst give them up freely of thy own good will, then we would take them thankfully; if not, we are prepared to fight unto the death against thee and thy people, whereby thou mayest fall at our hands, and the pigs thus would be ours in spite of thee.”

Easal considered this and said, “A great pity it would be to bring my people to battle over these swine, if that is to be the way of it.” Brian agreed with him saying, “A great pity it would be indeed.” Therefore Easal took counsel with his people that they might advise him of their views, and so it was agreed that they would give up the pigs to the sons of Tuireann of their own free will, as none had succeeded in standing against them up to that time.

And when they learned of the decision, Brian and his brothers gave their thanks to Easal; and wonder was upon them that they had been given the pigs without resistance, for in every other place a share of their own blood had been the cost of gathering their fine. Moreover the king invited them to stay within his palace that night, giving them food and drink, and fine beds to sleep upon. When they arose on the morrow and came before Easal, the pigs were presented to them. Brian thanked the king saying, “Thou hast been a gracious host to us, and it is well that thou hast given us these swine, for no part of our fine hath we gotten without violence, save this which thou hath given us.” And he composed a poem in praise of Easal, extolling his great name for all that he had done.

Thereafter the king asked the sons of Tuireann where they would next journey to, and they told him, “We shall go to the country of Ioruaidh, to get the whelp of the king there.” When he had heard this, Easal said to them, “I ask of thee but one favor, that I may accompany thee unto the court of the King of Ioruaidh, for his wife is a daughter of mine, and I would desire to persuade him to give the hound to thee without conflict.” To this the sons of Tuireann agreed, and so the king’s ship was made ready to carry them forth to the fair land of Ioruaidh. And when they had reached the coast of that country they found that the people and the warriors of that land were watching the harbors to guard against their landing, and when they saw them approach the shores of that kingdom, they people knew well who they were and shouted at them.

Therefore Easal went forth upon the shore peaceably to ask where his daughter’s husband, the king, could be found, and he went unto the King of Ioruaidh and related to him the story of the sons of Tuireann from its beginning to the end. Whereupon the king asked Easal, “What hath brought them to my kingdom?” Easal answered him, saying, “To ask for the whelp thou owneth.” Then said the king, “A bad thought hadst thou to come with

them and ask for it, for the gods hath never given so much luck to any three champions in the world that they might get my hound either by good will or force of arms." But Easal entreated him, saying, "Better wouldst it be for thee to give them the hound, for they hath put down so many of the kings of the world."

Yet all of his words were to no avail, for the king would not give up the hound; so Easal returned to the place where the sons of Tuireann were and gave them his account of all that had passed between himself and the king. When they learned of the king's answer Brian, Iuchar and Iucharba took up their weapons and declared battle upon the army of Ioruaidh, and a brave fight was fought by both sides, and the sons of Tuireann did mightily strike down their foes until they were separated in the turmoil of the conflict. Iuchar and Iucharba were fighting against the ranks of Ioruaidh's warriors in one place, while Brian held back another division of soldiers by himself alone, making his way toward the king.

And when Brian came face to face with the king in his battle pen, they fought with great fierceness against one another so that many blows passed between them until at the last Brian overcame the king and bound him, and brought him forth through the midst of his own army until he reached the place where Easal was, whereupon Brian said unto him, "I have brought thy daughter's husband unto thee, and I swear by my hand of valor that I could have more easily slain him three times than to bring him forth alive but once before thee this way."

Thereafter the king was unbound and the whelp was given to the sons of Tuireann and peace was made between them. And when their reconciliations had been made, they bid farewell to Easal and all of the rest. Yet it had come to pass that Lugh Lamhfada had discovered that the sons of Tuireann had already gathered those things which he required of them in order to wage battle against the Fomoraig; whereupon he cast a Druidic spell over them to bring forgetfulness of the rest of the fine which they had yet to collect. And by his enchantment he made a great desire and longing come over them to return to Ireland; whereby they made their voyage home without having gathered the rest of their fine.

When the sons of Tuireann came ashore in Ireland they went thenceforth to Brug na Boyne to return the boat of Manannan which they had borrowed, and Lugh was told of their coming; for he was then attending a feast at Tara in the company of Nuada, the king of the Tuatha Dé Danann. And when the news of their return was made known to him, Lugh went into the palace of the king at Tara and locked the gates thereof behind him. Then did he put on himself the breast-plate of Manannan, and the cloak of the daughters of Flidais, and gathered his weapons about him.

Thereafter the sons of Tuireann made their way to Tara and came to the place where Nuada was, and they were welcomed by the king and by all the Tuatha Dé Danann. Nuada asked them if they had collected the fine, and they answered saying, "We have it even now; but where is Lugh that we may render it unto him?" Nuada answered, "I knoweth not, for he took leave of my company not long before thou came here." And a search was made throughout the whole of the fair being held there, yet Lugh was not to be found.

Then Brian did say, "I knoweth well where Lugh be, for it hath been made known to him that we hath returned to Ireland, and he fearth that we mean to slay him by these deadly weapons which we hath brought, and he hath gone into the palace of Tara in expectation of our coming." Thenceforth messengers were sent to Lugh, yet he told them that he would in no wise leave the palace, but that the fine should be given to the king.

Therefore the sons of Tuireann presented Nuada with the fine which they had collected, and they went in one company together to the palace of Tara, whereupon Lugh came forth and accepted the fine, and said unto them, "What thou hath brought is sufficient payment for anyone who was ever killed, or that will ever be killed; yet there be a part of it which is missing that would be unlawful to overlook. Where is the cooking-spit, and where are the three shouts upon the hill that thou hast not yet given?"

Then woe befell the sons of Tuireann at their hearing this, and they departed and went unto their father's house that night, telling him of all that they had done and of the treatment Lugh had given them; and Tuireann was greatly grieved over it. On the morrow they went back to the ship, and their sister Ethne came with them. With tearful lament she said unto them, "It is a pity too great to bear that thou goeth not to Tara after all of the troubles thou hath suffered so far, even if I could not follow thee:

"O salmon of the silent Boyne,
O salmon of the River Liffey,
Since I cannot keep thee here
I am loath to part from thee
O rider of the wave of Tuaidh,
The man that stands strongest in the fight,
If thou cometh back again,
I think it will be displeasing to thy enemy.
Is there pity with thee for the sons of Tuireann
Leaning now on their green shields?
Their going is a cause for pity,
My heart swells because of it.

Tonight thou shalt be at Beinn Edair
Until the heavy coming of the morning,
Thou who hast gathered forfeits from heroes,
It is a pity thy journey is from Tara,
And from the pleasant plains,
And from great Uisnech of Meath;
There is naught so pitiful as this."

And when Ethne had finished her lament, the sons of Tuireann set out to sea and they did journey upon the ocean for three full months without finding the island of the fair-haired women. Therefore Brian put on his water dress and leapt into the sea, and for a long while he went in search of the island, traveling amid the rough waves of the green sea, whereby he came upon it at last. Thenceforth he did go in search of the court thereof, and when he found it there was naught there but for a troop of women doing needlework and stitching embroidery. And among all the things he saw about them, there was the cooking-spit.

No sooner had Brian seen it than he took it up by his hand and brought it with him to the door, whereupon the women began laughing at him and one among them, who was Caer herself, did say unto him, "A brave deed thou hast done to take up our spit in thy hand and think to make off with it; for even were thy brothers with thee, not even the least of our number would let the spit go with thee or any of thy band, and there be three times fifty of us. Yet, for the daring thou hast shown in trying to take it in spite of us, thou mayest take it with thee." Then did Brian thank them, and he bid them farewell as he went off in search of the boat; but his brothers deemed that he had been gone too long, and even as they made ready to leave, they saw him coming towards them so that they were greatly encouraged by the sight of him.

After Brian had climbed back into the boat, the three brothers sailed on to seek the Hill of Miochaoín. And when they came there Miochaoín approached them and would not let them go forth upon his hill, whereupon Brian attacked him, and the two champions fought one another even as two lions in combat; but at last Miochaoín did fall by the hands of Brian. Thereafter, Corc, Conn and Aedh the three sons of Miochaoín came forth to challenge the sons of Tuireann, and it was a savage battle indeed, for the sons of Miochaoín took up their spears and drove them through the bodies of Brian, Iuchar and Iucharba; yet still they fought on, and with their own spears they did slay Miochaoín's sons.

Then Brian said unto Iuchar and Iucharba, "How fairest thou, my beloved brothers?" And they answered him, saying, "Our deaths are nearly

upon us.” But Brian entreated them, “Let us arise while there is yet life in us that we may go forth and give three shouts upon the hill.” Iuchar and Iucharba struggled to stand but fell back, saying, “We cannot rise up for our strength has left us.” Therefore Brian summoned the last of his own fleeting strength, and though the blood ran forth from his wounds and dripped red upon the ground, he lifted his brothers in his arms and carried them onto the hill where they gave three shouts.

And after this was done, Brian brought his brothers with him to the boat, and they set out upon the sea for home, and at last Brian saw that the coast of Ireland lay ahead in the distance and said, “I see Beinn Edair and our father’s house, and Tara of the Kings.” Hearing this, his brothers replied, “We would count ourselves blessed with good health indeed if we could but see that, dear brother. Lift up our heads upon thy breast that we see Ireland once more, for thereafter life and death shall be the same to us.” And when their heads were lifted and they saw the shores of Ireland before them, they turned and looked upon Brian, seeing his wounds and said, “O Brian, brave flame without treachery, we would sooner die than to see the injuries you have suffered without a physician to heal you.”

When they reached the shore, the sons of Tuireann made their way to Beinn Edair, and from there they went on to the house of their father. Tuireann rejoiced that his sons had returned and greeted them with tearful eyes, but Brian said to him, “Leave us, dear father, and go in haste to Tara and bring this spit to Lugh, and ask for the sake of friendship that he might give thee a skin we brought him which may heal us, for it possesses that power. Tarry not, dear father, for thou may not find us yet living when thou returneth.”

Thenceforth Tuireann went to Tara where he found Lugh Lamhfada, and he brought before him the spit which Brian had given him, and he asked of him the loan of the skin, but Lugh would not give it. Whereupon Tuireann returned to his sons and told him that he could not get the skin. Then Brian said, “Take me with thee to Lugh, that I may see if I should be able to get the skin from him.”

So Tuireann brought his son to Tara, that he might ask the loan of the skin from Lugh himself, but Lugh still refused to give it, saying, “Even were thou to give me the weight of the world in gold, I would not lend that skin unto thee, save that it were certain that death should come upon thee and thy brothers for the deed thou hath done.”

When Brian heard the answer Lugh had given him, he bid his father to return him home, and when they reached the house of Tuireann, Brian lay down between his brothers as they breathed their last breaths and lived no more. And Tuireann wept bitter tears of anguish over the death of his three sons, who each had the making of a king of Ireland in them, and they were laid together and buried in one grave.

chapter eleven

the second Battle of mag tuired

Now Dagda held a house in Glenn Etin in the north, and there he met with the Morrigan a year after Nuada's council was adjourned, a week before Samhain, as the Tuatha Dé Danann prepared for battle. There where the river Unis of Connacht roars to the south in Corann, he beheld the Morrigan bathing in its waters. One of her feet stood upon Allod Echae to the south of the river, and the other on Loscuinn to the north of it. About her face fell nine loosened tresses. Dagda spoke to her, and they lay together, so that thenceforth the place was named 'The Bed of the Couple'.

The Morrigan told Dagda that the Fomoraig would land at Mag Scetne, and that he should summon Ireland's Druids to meet her at the ford of Unius, and that she would go into Scetne to destroy Indech son of Dea Domnann, the king of the Fomoraig by depriving him of the blood of his heart and the kidneys of his valor. After which she gave forth two handfuls of that blood to the Druids who gathered at the ford of Unius, which is called 'the ford of Destruction' because Indech perished there, which was accomplished by the Druids, through their incantations against the hosts of the Fomoraig.

Thereafter Dagda and the Morrigan parted company until a week thence when all the men of Ireland came together on Samhain. Eighteen thousand

was the number of their men that did gather on that day. Whereupon Lugh sent forth Dagda to seek out the Fomoraig and to delay them until the men of Ireland should come to the battle.

So Dagda went unto the camp of the Fomoraig and asked them for a truce of battle. This was granted unto him even as he asked. Porridge was then made for him by the Fomoraig, which was done to mock him, for his great love of porridge was notorious. They filled for him the king's cauldron, to the depth of five fists, into which went four-score gallons of new milk and the same quantity of meal and fat. Goats and sheep and swine were put into it, and they were all boiled together with the porridge. It was served to him by being poured forth into a hole dug in the ground, and Indech told Dagda that he would be slain unless he consumed all of it, for they wished he should eat his fill, so that he could not reproach the Fomoraig with inhospitality.

Then the Dagda took up his ladle, which was of such a great size that a man and woman could lie together in it. Within his ladle were halves of salted swine and a quarter of lard, and when Dagda tasted thereof, he did utter "Good food this!" When he had eaten all of the porridge from the hole, he scraped the sides of it clean and swallowed dirt and gravel. Sleep fell upon him thereafter when he had finished his meal, and his belly was swollen so that it was of a size greater than a house cauldron; whereupon the Fomoraig laughed at the sight of it.

When he awoke Dagda left them and went forth to the strand of Eba with much effort because of the bigness of his belly. Unbecoming was his apparel, a cape that hung but to the bend of his two elbows. A dun colored tunic about him that hung down to the greater part of his seat, being long breasted, with a hole in the peak. Two brogues of horsehide upon his feet, with the hair turned out. Behind him he did carry his club, which was of such a great size that it would require the effort of eight men to carry; and wherever he dragged it upon the ground, the club left deep tracks in the earth and these became the boundary ditches of the provinces of Ireland; therefore are they called 'The Track of Dagda's Club'.

The Fomoraig marched till they reached Scente, and men of Ireland were in Mag Aurfolraig. The two hosts threatened battle. Bres son of Elatha spoke to Indech and said, "The men of Ireland venture to offer us battle." Indech replied "I will fight anon, so that their bones will be crushed if they deny us their homage."

For reason of his vast knowledge in every art, the men of Ireland had resolved to prevent Lugh from going forth into battle fearing that he might be slain. To prevent this, nine guards were appointed to protect him. Tollus-

dam and Ech-dam and Eru; Rechtaid the white and Fosad and Fedlimid; Ibor and Scibar and Minn were the names of Lugh's protectors.

The chiefs of the Tuatha Dé Danann having assembled before Lugh, he asked the smith, Goibniu, what power he wielded for them? "Not hard to tell," said he. "Even if the men of Ireland were to bide in battle for seven years, for every spear that parts from its shaft, or sword that shall break therein, I will provide a new weapon in its place. No spear-point forged by my hand shall ever miss its target," said he, "No skin which it pierces shall taste life afterwards. That is a feat which Dolb, the smith of the Fomoraig, can never accomplish!"

Turning to Diancécht, Lugh said, "And thou, O Diancécht, what power canst thou wield?" Diancécht answered him, saying, "Not hard to tell, every man who shall be wounded in battle, save his head be cut off, or the tissue of his brain be pierced, or the marrow of his spine be severed, I will again make whole on the morrow."

Then Lugh addressed Credne, saying, "And thou, O Credne, what is thy power in the battle?" And Credne made the reply, "Not hard to tell, I shall make rivets for their spears and hilts for their swords, and bosses and rims for their shields."

Lugh looked next to Luchta, saying "And thou, O Luchta what service wilt thou render in the battle?" And Luchta answered him, saying "Not hard to tell, for I will fashion all the shields and spear shafts that they require."

Then Lugh asked Oghma, "And thou, O Oghma, what is thy power in the battle?" To which Oghma made the reply "Not hard to tell, for I will repel the king of the Fomoraig and three enneads of his companions, and capture up to a third of his men."

Then Lugh said unto Mathgen the Fáith, "And thou, O Mathgen, what power will thou wield?" Whereupon he answered "Not hard to tell, I shall fill their hearts with terror and they shall be overthrown by means of my craft, till their heroes are slain; for I will deprive them of two thirds of their might, and will bind up their bladders."

Lugh then asked "And thou, O cupbearers, what power will thou wield?" whereupon the cupbearers answered him, saying "Not hard to tell, we will bring a great thirst upon them, and they shall not find drink to quench it."

Next Lugh looked to Figol son of Matmos his Druid, asking him what feat he would perform and Figol replied "Not hard to tell, I will bring down showers of fire upon the faces of the Fomoraig, so that they cannot look upwards, whereby our warriors may slay them by their might."

Then Lugh said unto his Bard "And thou, O Cairbre son of Etain what power canst thou wield in the battle?" Whereupon Cairbre answered him, saying, "Not hard to tell, I will compose a satire against them and thereby

shame them, so that through the spell of my art they cannot defend themselves from our warriors.”

Turning to his two Druidesses, Lugh asked “And ye, O Be-cuile and ye O Dianann, what power can ye wield in the battle?” And to him they did answer “Not hard to tell, we will enchant the trees and the stones and the sods of the earth, so that they shall become a host under arms against them, and shall rout them in flight with horror and trembling.”

Then Lugh addressed Dagda, saying “And thou, O Dagda, what power canst thou wield on the Fomoraig host in the battle?” To which Dagda gave the reply “Not hard to tell, I will take the side of the men of Ireland, both in mutual smiting and destruction and sorcery. Under my club the bones of the Fomoraig will be smashed like hailstones beneath the hooves of charging steeds when we meet on the battlefield of Mag Tuired.”

Thuswise did Lugh speak with each one of them in turn; and he fortified and encouraged his army, so that each man of them had the spirit of a chieftain and king. And every day a battle was fought between the Fomoraig and the Tuatha De Danann, save only that the nobles among them withheld from conflict, which was wrought by the mightiest of their warriors.

And the Fomoraig wondered at the strangeness of what they discovered in the battle, that their spears and their swords became blunted and broken and those of their men who were slain did not return on the morrow. Yet it was not so with the Tuatha Dé Danann, for though their weapons might be blunted and broken that day, they would be renewed on the morrow, because Goibniu the smith was in the forge making swords and spears and javelins.

He did make the weapons by three turns. Then Luchta the wright would make the spear shafts by three draws of his knife, whereby they were finished by the third pass of his blade and he set them in the haft of the spear. And when the spearheads were stuck in the side of the forge he would throw the shanks with the shafts so there was no need to set them again. Then Credne the brazier would make the rivets by three turns, and would fix the shank of the spears to them so that they held together.

And to encourage the warriors that they should have no fear of death, Diancécht and his son, Octriull and his daughter Airmed chanted spells over the well of Slane in Achad Abla so that any man who was killed in battle and was placed into the well came back to life again through the power of their incantations.

All these things worked against the Fomoraig, so that they sent forth one of their soldiers to spy upon the Tuatha Dé Danann, namely Ruadan son of Bres and of Brighid the Dagda's daughter; for he was a son and a grandson of the Tuatha Dé Danann. Thereafter, Ruadan related to the Fomoraig the cunning of the smith and the wright and the brazier and the healers at the

well, and they sent him forth again to kill one of the artisans, that being Goibniu.

So Ruadan went to Goibniu and asked for a spear, with its rivets from the brazier and its shaft from the wright. Whereby it was given to him as he asked, and Cron mother of Fianlug was there grinding weapons, and she did sharpen Ruadan's spear. And when the spear had been given to him, Ruadan turned and wounded Goibniu with it, but he pulled it forth from his body and threw it at Ruadan, so that it went through him, and he died thereof before his own father in the company of the Fomoraig. Then Brighid came and mourned for her son with much wailing and tears, the like of which had never before been seen in Ireland.

Now there was among the Fomoraig a warrior named Octriallach son of Indech son of Dea Domnann, and he told the Fomoraig that each of their men should bring a stone from the stones of Drowes and cast into the well of Slane. So they went, and each man among them cast a stone into the well until it was filled and a cairn was piled above it, wherefore it came to be called Octriallach's Cairn. But the well is also called Lough Luibe, for Diancécht put into it one of each herb that grew in Ireland.

When the great battle came, the Fomoraig took leave of their camp, and marched forth in great legions. There was not a chief, nor man of prowess among them who was without armor upon his body, a helmet upon his head, a spear in his right hand, a heavy sharp sword in his belt, and a strong shield upon his shoulder. To attack the Fomoraig host on that day seemed like futile madness.

The kings and chiefs of the Fomoraig who led their army upon the field that day were Balor son of Dot son of Net; Bres son of Elatha; Tuiri Tortbuillech son of Lobos; Gol and Irgol Loscennlomm son of Lommgluech; Indech son of Dea Domnann, the king of the Fomoraig; Octriallach son of Indech; Omna and Bagna; and Elatha son of Delbaeth.

On the other side the Tuatha De Danann arose and left their nine companions to safeguard Lugh as they marched into battle. When the fighting began, Lugh escaped from his body guards with his charioteer and drove forth to the front of the hosts of the Tuatha De Danann. Thereupon a cruel and savage battle was fought between the Fomoraig and the men of Ireland. Lugh gave courage to the men of Ireland so that they valiantly fought to free themselves from the bondage of the Fomoraig, for better to them was it to die protecting their freedom in Ireland than to live under slavery and tribute as they had been.

The hosts let forth a great shout as they entered the battle. They clashed together and smote one another striking with swift and terrible blows. Many brave men fell that day. Dreadful was the carnage and slaughter that covered the field. Pride was turned to shame and anger was met with indignation.

Red ran the streams of blood upon the white skin of young heroes eagerly mangled by their foes.

The noise of warriors and champions slinging spears and striking shields and clashing swords filled the air all about them. The thunder of horses' hooves and the shouts and cries of men and the rattling of arrows and the ringing of metal and the crashing of armored bodies falling to the ground echoed in the ears of the soldiers. Scarcely could they stand so drenched with blood was the ground beneath their feet; and floating corpses rushed upon the river Unsenn. Nuada of the Silver Hand and Macha the battle fury of the Tuatha De Danann, were struck down by Balor grandson of Net. And Cassmael was slain by Octriallach son of Indech. Then Lugh and Balor met upon the field of battle.

Now the evil eye of Balor was never opened save only when the Fomoraig went forth into battle. Four men used to open the eye with a rod that held up the lid thereof. So great was the power of the eye that if a whole army but glimpsed at it, no matter how great their number, they could not resist even the smallest band of warriors. Poisonous was its power, for when Balor was but a boy he beheld through a window his father's Druids as they were concocting charms, and the fumes of their potion drifted into his eye penetrating it with the poison of their concoction.

When Balor heard the voice of Lugh entreating him to combat, he told his servants "Lift up mine eyelid that I may see the babbler who is conversing with me." And when the lid was raised from Balor's eye, Lugh slung his sling casting a stone at him, which carried the eye through the back of Balor's head, even as his own army looked on. And the sling-stone fell forth upon the host of the Fomoraig, and by it seven and twenty of them were killed, whereby the crowns of their heads were slung against the chest of Indech son of Dea Domnann, and the blood thereof did spill upon his lips. Thereupon Indech shouted "Let my Fáith Loch Halfgreen be summoned unto me!" And when the Loch went forth unto his chieftain, Indech did tell the seer, "Make known to me he who hath flung this which is cast upon me."

Then the Morrigan came forth and flew over the heads of the Tuatha De Danann, even as the three ravens Nemain, Macha and Badb, entreating the soldiers to fight with fierceness against their enemies, so that the battle became a rout, and the Fomoraig were driven back to the sea. Oghma, the champion of the Tuatha De Danann, and Indech son of Dea Domnann, the king of the Fomoraig fell upon one another in single combat. Loch Halfgreen besought Lugh for quarter, whereupon Lugh said unto him "Give to me three wishes." And Loch answered him, saying "Thou shalt have them, for until the day of doom I will ward off from Ireland all plundering by the Fomoraig and at the end of the world, every ailment." So Loch was spared.

And in return for the quarter Lugh had granted him, Loch did bestow names upon Lugh's nine chariots.

Thereafter Lugh and his companions found Bres son of Elatha unguarded, and Bres beseeched Lugh, saying "Better is it to give me quarter than to slay me." Wherefore Lugh asked "What then will follow from that?" Then did Bres reply "If I be spared the cows of Erin will always be in milk." To which Lugh responded, "I will put this before our Ollamain."

And when Lugh came unto Maeltne Morbrethach, he asked "Shall Bres have quarter for giving constant milk to the cows of Erin?" Whereupon Maeltne said "He shall not have quarter, for he hath no power over their age, nor their offspring, though he may milk them so long as they yet live."

Then Lugh returned unto Bres telling him "That will not save thee, as thou hast no power over their age and their offspring, though thou mayest milk them. Is there aught else that will save thee, O Bres?" Wherefore Bres did reply "There is in truth, tell thy Ollamh that for sparing me the men of Ireland shall reap a harvest in every quarter of the year."

Then Lugh asked of Maeltne "Shall Bres be spared for giving the men of Ireland a harvest of corn every quarter?" And Maeltne answered him "It hath suited us that the spring be for ploughing and sowing, and summer for the growing of corn, and autumn for harvesting the ripened corn, and winter for consuming it."

So Lugh said unto Bres "That does not save thee but less than that will spare thee." Whereupon Bres asked of Lugh the meaning thereof, and Lugh told him, saying "Tell us how the men of Ireland should plough? How should they sow? How should they reap? After instructing us in these three skills thou wilt be spared."

Bres then said "Tell the men of Ireland that upon the second day of the week should they plough, and likewise on the same day should they cast seed into the field, as also with their reaping." So by that means Bres was set free.

And in their battle with the Fomoraig, Oghma the champion took Orna the sword of Tethra, a king of the Fomoraig. Oghma unsheathed the sword and cleansed it, whereupon the sword related all the feats that had been accomplished by it; for in those days was it the custom of swords, when unsheathed, to set forth the deeds that had been done by them. Therefore are all swords entitled to the tribute of cleansing them when they have been drawn forth from their sheath. For charms are preserved in swords by such means.

Now in that battle the Fomoraig had carried off Dagda's harp, which was called Uaithne; therefore Dagda, Oghma and Lugh did pursue them, even unto banquet hall wherein Bres and his father Elatha held forth. And when the Tuatha De Danann did enter therein, they saw the harp hanging upon

the wall. The very harp in which Dagda had bound the melodies, so that they played not except by the call with which he summoned them forth:

“Come apple-sweet murmurer!
Come four-angled frame of harmony!
Come summer, Come winter!
From the mouths of harps and bags and pipes!”

And when Dagda had spoken those words the harp did come forth from the wall and killed nine men as it came unto him. And he played upon it the three strains whereby harpers are distinguished, the strain of slumber, the strain of laughter and the strain of lament. And when he played to them the strain of lament, their tearful women did weep. And when he played to them the strain of laughter, their women and children laughed. And when he played to them the strain of sleep, their company fell asleep. Whereby Dagda, Oghma and Lugh did escape without scaith from the Fomoraig, though they desired to slay them.

Then Dagda brought with him the heifer which Bres had given to him for his labor. And when she called her calf all the cattle of Ireland which the Fomoraig had taken as their tribute, came forth unto her and grazed.

After the battle was won and bodies had been cleared from the plain, the Morrigan, proclaimed the triumph of the Tuatha Dé Danann to all the royal heights of Ireland and to its mounds and its chief waters and its river mouths, so that all did know of their victory:

“Peace up to heaven,
Heaven down to earth,
Earth under heaven,
Strength in each,
A cup very full,
Full of honey;
Mead in abundance.
Summer in winter.”

Yet the Morrigan prophesied ill tidings of ruin that would someday come to pass, saying:

“I foresee a world that will not be dear to me.
Summer without flowers,
Cattle without milk,
Women without modesty,

Men without honor,
Conquests without a king.
Trees without fruit,
Sea without produce,
False judgments of old men,
Unjust rulings of Brehons,
Every man a traitor,
Every youth a robber.
The son will enter his father's bed,
The father will enter his son's bed,
Each shall be his brother's brother-in-law.
He shall seek no woman outside his own house.
A time of evil!
The son shall deceive his father,
The daughter shall deceive her mother."

And in the days thereafter Buach, the daughter of Daire Donn and wife of Lugh, had lain with Cermait son of Dagda, so that out of jealousy Lugh did slay Cermait in a fit rage. Whereupon Dagda took the body of his son and by way of his knowledge and learning he did embalm it with herbs and olibanum and myrrh; and upon his back he did carry the body of Cermait out of Ireland and traveled far until he came to the East of the World. There Dagda did chance to meet upon the road three men and he bade tidings of them. The men told him that they were brothers and did share three treasures of their father; a shirt, a staff, and a cloak.

Dagda asked of them by what virtues were these three things treasures, and they answered him, saying, "This great staff that thou seest hath a smooth end and a rough end. One end doth slay the living, while the other end doth bring the dead to life. He who puts on the cloak may taketh any shape, form, figure or color that he desires as long as he wears it. As for the shirt, neither grief nor sickness can touch the skin that is covered by it."

Hearing this, Dagda bid the one holding the staff to place it in his hand, and when this was done Dagda struck each of them with the rough end of the staff so that all three fell dead upon the ground. Then with the smooth end of the staff Dagda touched the body of his son, so that he arose and lived once more. And when Cermait saw the three men who lay dead upon the ground, he asked of his father who they were. Dagda answered him, saying, "They are three brothers who I met, sharing their father's treasures. They lent unto me this staff by which I slew them with one end, and with the other end I brought thee back to life." Cermait then spake unto his father, saying, "'Tis

a sad deed, that they should not also be brought back to life by that which hath caused me to live again.”

Heeding these words Dagda touched the bodies of each of the three brothers with the smooth end of the staff so that they arose and lived once more. And when they had risen and stood before him, Dagda spoke unto them, saying, “Knowest thou not that I have slain thee with thy own staff?” Whereupon they did answer him, saying, “We knoweth this well, and thou hast taken unfair advantage of us!”

Then Dagda said to them, “I have knowledge of your staff, and with it I have restored life unto thee. Therefore wilt thou lend it unto me, that I may take it forth unto Ireland?” And when they considered this, they asked of Dagda what sureties he might offer to safeguard its return, and he did tell them, “By the sun and the moon, by the land and the sea, provided that with it I may slay my foes and bring back to life my friends who have fallen.”

“How shall we share the other two treasures between the three of us?” they asked. “Two of you shall be with treasures and one shall be without until his turn hath come around,” said Dagda. Agreeing to this, the brothers gave Dagda the loan of their staff and he did take it forth with him, whereby he did return unto Ireland together with Cermait his son. And by the power of that staff Dagda did slay his foes, and brought back to life his friends who had been slain, and did take the kingship of Ireland, ruling over it for eighty years thereafter, until the throne passed unto Delbaeth son of Oghma.

For ten years Delbaeth held the kingship of Ireland and at the end of his reign he was succeeded by his son, Fiachna, who ruled for ten years until he was slain by Eogan of Inber Mor. Thereafter the kingship of Ireland was divided between the three sons of Cermait, who were Sethor MacCuill, Tethor MacCecht and Cethor MacGreine, for they had married the three daughters of Fiachna son of Delbaeth, and their rule was for nine and twenty years until Ireland was taken by the Gaedil.

chapter twelve

the conquest of the gaeðil

Now there lived at that time in the land of Spain descendants of Sru, son of Esru, son of Gaedel Glas. They had come forth from Scythia and after many long years of wandering had taken the land of Spain by force. And by their descent from Gaedel Glas, son of Nuil, son of Feinius Farsaid did their tribe take its name so that they were called the Gaedil. And there was a prophecy upon them made by Caicher, a Druid of their people, that they should never have rest until their children had reached Ireland. Whereby three hundred years thereafter it came to pass that Ith son of Breogan, son of Brath, who dwelt in the city of Brigantia in Spain, climbed to the top of his father's tower on the evening of Samhain and looked out unto the ocean where, far in the distance, he perceived the shores of Ireland.

And when Ith had seen that country he was filled with a great desire to go there, whereupon he took counsel with his brothers, Bile, Faud and Breaga, relating to them what he had seen. But Breaga sought to discourage him from journeying thither, saying that it was not a distant land that he had seen across the sea, but rather a cloud upon the horizon. Yet Ith held firm in his desire to journey there, and thenceforth he did sail together with his son, Lugaid, and others in his company, until at last they did reach the harbor of Bentracht, at Mag Itha, in Ireland.

When Ith and his companions had come ashore, they were greeted by a host of the Tuatha De Danann who bade tidings of them, whereupon Ith asked of them the name of their land and who were its rulers, and they answered him, saying, "To Innis Elga thou hast come; Sethor MacCuill, Tethor MacCecht and Cethor MacGreine, the three sons of Cermait, son of Dagda, rule over this land."

And it happened that upon this same day an assembly of the chiefs and nobles of the Tuatha De Danann had gathered before the court of MacCuill and his brothers, complaining that the kings had kept too great a share of the estate of their wives' father, Fiachna son of Delbaeth, who had been slain by Eogan of Inber Mor. When Ith learned of this, he went forth to Ailech Neid with Lugaid his son and two thirds of their company, and when they had come to the place where the three kings were assembled, they bid Ith welcome and at length they told him of the contention that had arisen between them and the other nobles of the Tuatha De Danann.

Whereupon Ith said unto them, "Do right and be thou just amongst thyselfs, for it is altogether fitting that thou shouldst maintain a good brotherhood among thee. Proper is it for thou to keep a gracious disposition. Good be the land and the kingdom thou dost inhabit; bountiful is its harvest, its honey, its fish, its wheat, and barleycorn, fair and mild is its weather. All that is necessary for thee is to be found in this land." And thereafter, when Ith had said these things, he took leave of the assembly, bidding his hosts farewell, and returned unto his ship.

Having listened to all that Ith had said unto them, the Tuatha De Danann grew jealous in their possession of Ireland by reason of the praise Ith had lauded upon their land, and there arose among the Tuatha De Danann a band who followed after Ith in great anger, so that by their hostility he was gravely wounded upon the plain of Mag Itha, which was named for him. Scarcely was he able to return unto his ship, so great were his wounds, but Ith's companions came to his aid and brought him aboard where he died even as they sailed forth upon the open waters.

And when at last they reached the shores of Spain, the body of Ith was shown to his brothers, and a great anguish fell upon them over the sorrow of his dying in such a way. Wherefore the sons of Breogan took counsel together with their kinsmen, the sons of Mil, and they did resolve that the men of the Gaedil should go forth to avenge the death of Ith upon the Tuatha Dé Danann. Then did the men of the Gaedil gather together from every place in each region of Spain, so that all their warriors and men of arms did assemble at one place in the city of Brigantia; whereupon the sons of Mil together with their kinsmen and countrymen ventured forth upon the sea in a fleet of ships threescore and five in number.

Thus did they set forth, heading out upon the open sea for Ireland to visit their revenge upon the Tuatha Dé Danann for the bad welcome Ith had received from them. Donn son of Mil led them forth in their expedition, with forty chiefs amongst them as their leaders; Eremon, Eber Finn, Ir, Amergin Glungel, Colptha, Airech Febra, Erannan, Muimne, Luigne, Laigne, Palap, Er, Orba, Feron, Fergin, Eber son of Ir, Brega, Cuala, Cooley, Blad, Fuad, Buirthemne, Eblinne, Nar, Lugaid, Lui, Bile, Buas, Bres, Buaighe, Fulman, Mantan, Caicher, Suirge, En, Un, Etan, Sobairce, Sedga, and Goisten were the names of their forty chiefs.

And when they perceived the shores of Ireland ahead of them in the distance, the warriors grew eager to reach that land and did engage in a contest of their rowing as their fleet sailed forth upon the sea, so that Ir son of Mil advanced a full wave beyond the rest of the ships by virtue of his great strength and valor. When Donn, the eldest of the sons of Mil saw this, he declared in envy, "It is not just for Ir to proceed before Lugaid son of Ith." Whereupon the oar which Ir was rowing with split asunder and Ir fell backwards upon the thwart of the boat breaking his back, and died from that wound the following night. Thereafter his body was preserved until at length it could be buried when at last they had reached Ireland, and there they did bury him at Scellic of Irras Desceirt of Corco Dibne. Great was the grief of Eremon, Eber Finn, and Amergin at the death of their brother, so that they were alike of one mind and said, "Justice shall prevent Donn from enjoying the land of which he was jealous toward Ir his brother."

When the sons of Mil drew near the shores of Ireland, they sought to land their fleet at Inber Stainge, but the Tuatha Dé Dannan would not allow them to come ashore there, having held no discourse with them. By their skills of Druidry and enchantment they did cast a spell whereby the shores of Ireland were made invisible to the sons of Mil, so that the island was made no more discernible to them than the sides of a sow floating in the ocean. Three times did they circle around Ireland until at last it became visible unto them. On the eve of Beltane they came ashore at the harbor of Inber Scene. After a journey of three days their company came to Sliab Mis where they were greeted by a host of the Tuatha Dé Danann. Banba, daughter of Fiachna son of Delbaeth, the wife of Sethor MacCuill, was among them. And when the sons of Mil drew near the host, Amergin asked of the queen her name, whereupon she said unto him, "Banba is my name, and from it this country is called Banba also." And she asked of the sons of Mil that her name might always remain upon the island, and to that they were in agreement.

Thereafter they went forth to Eblinne where they held discourse with Fodhla, daughter of Fiachna son of Delbaeth, the wife of Tethor MacCecht. And when the sons of Mil asked of that queen her name she said, "My name

is Fodhla, and for me is this country named. And she asked that her name might forever remain upon the island, and to this they did agree. Then they did go forth to the hill of Uisnech in Meath until they came to another queen who was Ériu, daughter of Fiachna son of Delbaeth, the wife of Cethor MacGreine. And when the sons of Mile came before her, she spoke unto them, saying, "Welcome unto thee, O warriors. It is long since the prophecy of thy coming was foretold. Forever shall this island remain in thy possession. There is no country in all the world more fair, nor shall any race ever be more perfect than thine own."

When Amergin heard the words spoken by Ériu, he answered her, saying, "Good is this to hear." But Donn did protest, saying, "It is not to her that we should offer thanks, but to the gods themselves and to our own might." Whereupon Ériu said unto him, "It is naught to thee, for thou shalt never lay conquest upon this island, nor will thy children; but I make of it a gift unto thee, O sons of Mil of the children of Breogan, that my name may ever be upon this land." Then said Amergin; "Ériu shall forever be the chief name of this island!"

The men of the Gaedil proceeded thence to Tara and came unto the court of the three kings, Sethor MacCuill, Tethor MacCecht, and Cethor MacGreine, whereupon they demanded of them either battle, kingship, or judgment. And when the kings of the Tuatha Dé Danann had taken counsel together, they adjudged that the sons of Mil should have nine days to either depart from Ireland, or submit to their kingship, or to prepare for battle. On hearing this, Donn son of Mil declared, "Were my advice to be followed, it is battle that we should choose." Then said the kings, "We grant the judgment of thy own Filid to thee, for should they offer a false judgment against us, they shall die even where they standth."

And when Donn had asked of his brother the revelation of his judgment, Amergin said "Let us leave the land to them until we shall return and take it from them by force." Then asked Donn, "Where shall we go to?" and Amergin answered him, saying, "Over nine waves;" whereupon he related in verse:

"The men thou hast found are in possession.
Over the nine green-necked waves
Of the sea advance ye,
Unless by thy power then be planted;
Swiftly let the battle be prepared.
I assign the possession
Of the land thou hast found,
If thou lovest concede this award,
If thou lovest not concede it not;
It is I that say this to you."

When Amergin uttered this pronouncement, the men of the Gaedil agreed with his judgment and left the court of the three kings of the Tuatha Dé Danann, returning to their ships, whenceforth they embarked from the harbor of Inber Scene and went upon the sea to the distance of nine waves. And when they had departed, the Druids of the Tuatha Dé Danann declared, "Have faith in our powers, for by them the sons of Mil shall never return to Ireland." Thereafter by means of their enchantment the Druids did raise a great storm which fell upon the fleet of the Gaedil so that their boats were driven westward by its winds, and the sons of Mil were made weary from their struggle on the sea.

Then Donn called out to the ship which bore his brother Amergin, saying, "A Druid's wind is this!" and Amergin answered, "Indeed it would appear, lest it be higher than the masts of our ships; discern if it be so." thereupon Erannan, the youngest son of Mil, climbed the mast of his boat and discovered that the storm was not above them; but while he was clinging to the mast, he slipped from it and fell upon the deck of his ship so that his limbs were shattered. When he fell, Donn cried out, "A shame it is upon our men of learning that they cannot calm a Druidic storm!" Then said Amergin; "It shall be no shame!" Wherefore he rose up and pronounced his incantation:

"I invoke the land of Ireland.
Much coursed be the fertile sea,
Fertile be the fruit strewn mountain,
Fruit strewn be the showery wood,
Showery be the river of waterfalls,
Of waterfalls be the lake of deep pools,
Deep pooled be the hilltop well,
A well of the tribes be the assembly,
An assembly of the kings be Tara,
Tara be the hill of the tribes,
The tribes of the sons of Mil,
Of Mil be the ships the barks,
Let the lofty bark be Ireland,
Lofty Ireland darkly sung,
An incantation of great cunning;
The great cunning of the wives of Bres,
The wives of Bres of Buaighe;
The great lady Ireland,
Eremon hath conquered her,
Ir, Eber have invoked for her.
I invoke the land of Ireland."

And when Amergin's incantation had ended the sea immediately fell calm and the waves thereof became tranquil; whereupon Donn exclaimed, "I shall put to the blades of swords and spears all the warriors in Ireland!" But lo, even as he spoke, the winds rose up once more against their fleet, so that the boat in which he sailed was tossed asunder and Donn, together with all those aboard his ship did perish in the sea.

Four and twenty valiant warriors, twelve women, and four mercenaries did drown that day in the waters off Dumacha; and there, at length, was the body of Donn buried, together with all of the chieftains of his people who perished with him, in the grave mound at Dumacha which was thereafter called Tech Duinn. Eremon himself buried Dil the daughter of Mil, for great was his love of her, and when he covered her body with the earth, he said, "This sod doth lie upon a dear one." Bile son of Brige, Airech Febra, Buss, Bres, Buahne and Erannan were the names of the chieftains of the Gaedil who drowned together with Donn.

Six was the number of their noble women who perished since the sons of Mil departed Spain in their voyage to Ireland; Baun the wife of Bile, Dil the wife of Donn, Scene the wife of Amergin, Fial the wife of Lugaid, together with the wives of Ir and Muirthemne. It was for the memory of his wife who died in their passage upon the open waters that Amergin gave the name of the first harbor which they came to in Ireland, which he named Inber Scene.

Fial the daughter of Mil died on the night when the Gaedil came ashore in Ireland, for her husband, Lugaid son of Ith, had been bathing in a lake which burst forth upon their arrival, and Fial herself was bathing in the river which flowed forth from the lake; thereupon Lugaid rose up out of the water and went to the place where his wife was bathing and stood naked before her, whereby she died of shame from looking upon him. For her is the river Féale named, which flows from Lough Luigdech. Forlorn was Lugaid with sorrow over Fial's passing, and he did say:

"Sit we here across the strand
Stormy the cold;
Chattering in my teeth,
Great is the tragedy
Of the sorrow that has fallen upon me.
I speak of the woman who has died
Whom fame magnifies,
Fial is her name,
From a warrior's nakedness
Upon the clean stones.
Great is the loss that comes of her death

Which has reached me,
Harshly falling upon my spirit;
My nakedness as her husband,
She saw looking upon me
While I rested here.”

When the sons of Mil came to Inber Féile, after they buried the nobles of their troop who had perished, Eremon and Eber Finn divided their fleet together with their highest ranking chieftains and servants between them. Eber Finn remained in the southern part of Ireland with his thirty ships, until they waged war against the hosts of the Tuatha De Danann. The chieftains who accompanied Eber Finn were his four sons, Er. Orba, Feron and Fegana; Lugaid son of Ith, Cuala, Blad, Ebleo, Nar, together with their six champions, En, Un, Etan, Caicher, Mantan and Fulman. The names of their servants were Adar, Aigne, Deist, Deala, Cliu, Morba, Fea, Liffe, Femen, Feara, Meda, and Obla.

Eremon with his thirty ships sailed along the coast of Ireland until he landed at Inber Colptha. The names of those chieftains who went with him were Eber son of Ir, Amergin the Bard, Palap, Muimne, Luigne, Laigne, Brega, Muirthemne, Fuad, Cualgne, Colptha, Goisten, and the three champions Sedga, Suirge, and Sobairce. The names of their servants were Aidne, Ai, Asal, Mide, Cuib, Cera, Ser, Slan, Ligen, Dul, Trega, and Line. And when Amergin set his right foot upon the shore at Inber Colptha, he pronounced this incantation:

“I am a wind upon the waves
I am a tide upon the ocean
I am the roar of the sea,
I am a stag of seven tines,
I am a hawk upon a cliff,
I am a boar of fierce valor,
I am a salmon in a pool,
I am a lake upon a plain,
I am the accumulation of learning,
I am a spear that thirsts for blood,
I am a Druid who inspires the mind with enlightenment.
Who but I knows the mystery of the standing stones?
Who but I knows where the sun shall set?
Who but I knows the ages of the moon?
Who but I knows the names of the waterfalls?
Who but I knows how to summon cattle from the house of Tethra?

Who but I knows the art of forming weapons to defend a fort?
Who but I knows the incantation to reveal the secrets of the oghams?"

And thereafter he did invoke the bounty of the creatures of the land, sea and sky, chanting:

"Fishful sea,
Fertile land,
Burst of fish,
Fish under wave,
With courses of birds.
Rough Sea,
A white wall
With hundreds of salmon;
Broad Whale,
A port song,
A burst of fish."

When the sons of Mil came ashore they swiftly made their way to Sliab Mis where they met in battle against the Tuatha Dé Danann, and as the prophecy had foretold victory belonged to the men of the Gaedil. Many great warriors on both sides fell that day upon Sliab Mis. Fas, the wife of Un son of Uicce, was slain there, and for her is Glen Faise named. Scotla the wife of Mil died there also, and she was buried between Sliab Mis and the sea, at a place which is yet called Scotla's Grave.

Thereafter the sons of Mil went forth to Tailtiu, whereupon they fought another battle against the Tuatha De Danann. With great courage and valor was it fought, from dawn to dusk, until the three kings and the three queens of Ireland fell by the hands of the Gaedil. MacCeht was slain by Eremon; MacCuill by Eber Finn; MacGreine by Amergin; Ériu by Suyirge; Banba by Caicer; and Fodla by Etan.

Following the battle of Tailtiu the Tuatha De Danann retreated to the sea and the host of the sons of Mil pursued them at length, but many of their warriors did fall along with two of their noble chiefs; Fuad was slain at Sliab Fuait, and Cúailnge was killed upon Sliab Cúailnge, so that those places yet bear their names. And when the Gaedil declared their victory over the Tuatha Dé Danann and took the lordship of Ireland, there arose among them a contention over the kingship between Eremon and Eber Finn, and Amergin was called forth to make peace between them. His judgment was that the inheritance of the eldest who was Donn, should go to Eremon who was the youngest, and his inheritance to Eber Finn after him.

Yet Eber Finn would not abide by Amergin's decision and insisted that Ireland should be divided between them. Eremon agreed to that and so the northern half of the country, from Srub Brain to the Boyne, went to Eremon, while the southern half, from the Boyne to Tonn Clidna went to Eber Finn. Five chieftains presided in each division, Amergin, Sedga, Goisten, Suirge, and Sobairce to the north; Etan, Un, Mantan, Fulman, and Caicer to the south.

In that year Eremon and his people built seven forts in the north of Ireland, Rath Beothaig above the Nore in Argat Ros and Rath Oinn in Cula by Eremon; the Causeway of Inber Mor in Ui Enechglais by Amergin; Dun Nair in Sliab Modoirn by Goisten; Dun Delginnse in Cuala by Sedga; Dal Riada in Morbolg by Sobairce; and Dun Edar by Suirge. Six forts did Eber Finn and his people build in the south, they were Rath Uaman in Leinster by Eber Finn; Rath Arda Suird by Etan son of Uicce; Carrig Blaraige by Mantan Carrig Fethnaide by Un son of Uicce; Dun Ardinne by Caicer; and Rath Riogbard in Muireasc by Fulman.

And though the sons of Mil had taken Ireland, still the Tuatha Dé Danann held great power over them; for Dagda caused the Dananns to destroy their crops and their cattle in vengeance for the deaths of his three grandsons, Sethor, Tethor, Cethor, and their wives; so that the Gaedil had neither corn nor milk until peace was made between them. Therefore the sons of Mil gave dominion over all those places under the earth to the Tuatha Dé Danann, and to each of their chiefs a brug was given for their dwelling; whereby their corn and milk was thenceforth restored.

Dagda settled the division of the brugs, giving Sídhe ar Femhin to his son Bodb Dearg; Sídhe Finnachaidh to Lir; Brí Léith to Midhir; Sliabh Gallion to Culainn the Smith; Ess Ruadh to Ilbhreac son of Manannan; Cleitech to Boand; Sídhe Findabrach to the sons of Derc; Cnoc Firinn to Donn son of Midir; Sídhe Uamain to Ethal Abuail; and Brug na Boyne was claimed by Dagda himself until he gave it to his son Oengus Og. Then Manannan son of Lir caused a veil of enchantment to be placed upon all the Tuatha Dé Danann and over their realm of Siabra so that they were made invisible to the eyes of mortal men.

In the generations that followed Tigernmas son of Fallach, son of Ethriel, of the line of Eremon, took the kingship of Ireland after defeating Conmáel son of Eber Finn at the battle of Oenach Macha. A great warrior was he, and in the first year of his reign, he was champion of seven and twenty battles against the progeny of Eber Finn, so that the line of Eber Finn was all but vanquished from the land of Ireland. Seven lakes and three rivers burst forth from the ground in Ireland while he was king.

It was in the reign of Tigernmas that gold was first smelted in Ireland by Luchadan the wright, from which drinking horns were fashioned and

given by the king to his followers; and for the first time was clothing dyed in colors of purple, blue and green, and worn with ornaments in the form of brooches and fringes. And so that each class might be distinguished from the others, Tigernmas decreed that the number of colors worn by his subjects in their garments should vary according to their rank and position; wherefore servants were entitled to but one color, while peasants wore two. Warriors were allowed three colors and the owners of land were permitted to wear four. Chieftains might wear five colors, while Ollamain and royalty held the right to wear six.

And during the reign of Tigernmas, there came to Ireland a ship bearing a message from the king of the Fomoraig asking that the land of Ireland might be searched for precious stones, and copper, and tin, and other metals of value, and that a quarter of their worth should be paid to those chieftains of Ireland from whose lands they were taken, and that all the storehouses, and provisions and tools used for this purpose should be bought from the men of Ireland.

Then did Tigernmas summon the Gaedil to assemble before him in council to consider the offer of the Fomoraig; but lo, the chieftains of the Gaedil held the Fomoraig in great distrust, and they gave their answer saying that they should search their land themselves for such treasures.

Now at that time Ishbaal, the daughter of the king of the Fomoraig, was married to Aodab, king of Ceisrael; and under her there served a group of priests who brought with them to Ireland an idol wrought of gold and silver, which was their chief god, Crom Cruach, and with it twelve lesser idols made of stone overlaid with burnished bronze. The priests of Crom Cruach bid Tigernmas to cause a rath to be built on Mag Senaig, that it should serve as a temple for the idols; to this Tigernmas agreed, and so it was done.

The golden idol of Crom Cruach was placed therefore upon Mag Senaig with the twelve lesser idols facing round about it. And when this was accomplished, the priests of Crom Cruach bade Tigernmas to call forth all the Gaedil to assemble upon the plain where the idols had been placed, that they might bow down before their god to hear the oracle of his judgments on their petitions by way of the priests who served him. Tigernmas took heed of their advice and on the eve of Samhain, he caused all the Gaedil to gather before the idols that stood on Mag Senaig; and the priests of Crom Cruach implored them to obey the commands of their god, that he should bestow his blessings upon Ireland.

But when the people had assembled, they were loathe to prostrate themselves before the idols, saying that they would not bow down except that Crom Cruach should appear before them himself. Then did the priests say unto Tigernmas that lest his people bow down before the idols, a terrible

curse would be visited upon Ireland so that all their corn should be blighted and their cows would give no milk. Thereupon Tigernmas commanded the Gaedil to do as the priests bid, so that they might be spared of this curse.

And when the people prostrated themselves before the idols, the priests revealed the judgment of Crom Cruach which was that they should offer unto him all their firstborn children in sacrifice, that the bounty of their land might be preserved. Then was heard a great outcry upon Mag Senaig, and the people beat their palms and bruised their bodies and wailed over this judgment; shedding showers of tears as they bowed down before the idol. With deep lamenting and bitterness they slew one third of their offspring, pouring their blood around the idol in horror of Crom Cruach, so that Mag Senaig was thereafter known as Mag Slecht, the Plain of Adoration.

But lo, the people of Ireland prostrated themselves in such grief before Crom Cruach, that their foreheads and their noses, and the joints of their knees and elbows were broken by their bowings, thus did three fourths of their number perish, and Tigernmas with them. Thereafter those who were left among them rose up against the priests and slew the chief one among them, and as many of the others as they could overtake; so that the rest fled in fear for their lives, departing in haste from the shores of Ireland and returning from whence they came.

Then did the bards chant their dirge over the body of Tigernmas who fell together with ten hundred and three thousand of his people in the fiftieth year of his reign and the seventy-seventh year of his age. Thereafter Ireland was without a High King for seven years, until Eochaid Etgudach took the kingship.

Now the Bard Tuan son of Starn had witnessed all of these things, for he had remained in Ireland since he first came there in the company of his uncle Pathalon many centuries before, and by the spell of the feth-fiada he had taken many forms in his long life. When the race of Neimheadh came to Ireland, Tuan awoke from the slumber of old age in shape of a stag; and when the Fir Bolg came, Tuan was renewed again in the likeness of a fierce boar. The coming of the Tuatha Dé Danann found Tuan transformed into a hawk, and he was yet in that form when the sons of Mil took Ireland from the Tuatha Dé Danann, leaving them to reside in the unseen regions within the hills and the hollow spaces beneath the earth so that they came to be known as the Áes Sídh, the 'People of the Mounds'.

But Tuan felt the weariness of age come upon him once more, so he returned to his cave in the province of Ulster where he would be regenerated anew; and when Tuan awoke the next morning he found himself transformed into a fish. He was the king of all the salmon of Ireland, and in that form he coursed throughout all the waters of that land with great vigor and freedom.

He came to know the depths of every pool and lough, and the currents of each river and stream that flowed in that country to the open sea. Boundless was the realm of his journeys beneath the waves amid the waters of the world, and all the secret depths of the seas were revealed to him.

Many generations of men passed since the Gaedil first came to Ireland, and Tuan found himself far from his home. A great longing came over him to return there, and he swam for countless days and nights until he reached the waters of Ulster once more. Though weary from his travels, he found rest in the pools and streams of Ireland and was refreshed. He leapt among the waterfalls and swam once more in the currents of Ireland's rivers, and the men of the Gaedil longed to catch him, so that no matter where he journeyed they sought for him.

And so it was that one day the fisherman of Cairill the King of Ulster captured him in his net. Tuan fought against his captor with great fierceness, but it was to no avail. The fisherman brought forth his prize, the king of all the salmon, to the court of Cairill. When the king's wife saw the great fish, she desired to dine upon it at her table; wherefore it was prepared and she ate thereof, so that although Tuan was consumed, he grew within the queen's belly into a child. In the fullness of time she gave birth to him, so that he lived again once more and Tuan son of Cairill was his name. From his immortal memories is the history of Ireland before the coming of the Gaedil preserved, for Tuan was witness to all those things which came to pass over many centuries during his long lifetime.

part two



chapter thirteen

the ways of magic

All things belonging unto the mortal world hath their source in varying compositions of the four natural elements, namely Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. And each of these four elements hath its origin in, and representeth the refined essence of, a certain aspect of a fifth and greater element which be Spirit. And this ultimate source of all universal power exists in part within every living thing made from the four elements of nature, and it is this force which binds the diverse combinations of the elements together in order to form all life and matter.

Yet even though the elements themselves be eternal, that which is made of and composed from the elements is temporal and mortal, for it is the way of the elements that each one wears upon and seeks dominion over the others, even as the peat of the earth is consumed by fire which in turn can be made to heat water into a vapor that dissipates into the air, the fire itself cannot burn without air and can be extinguished with water. Likewise those material things which are made up of the elements affect and degrade one another, so that they are continually worn away and broken down again into the basic elements from which they are essentially composed. And herein lies the greatest of all mysteries: that life cannot exist without death, for all creation results in and is born out of destruction.

Thus within all the forces of nature, both creative and destructive, there exists alongside their physical or material presence, a spiritual essence also;

and in this ethereal quality of spirit is found the resolution of will that in its ultimate expression is incarnate as those divine beings who are called gods. Just as the soul governeth the body, likewise the gods doth govern those forces over which they are a conscious manifestation, for all things hath both a physical and a spiritual aspect which are innate in their existence. And it is through the will of the gods that the forces of nature act upon and combine the eternal elements according to their expressed designs, so that life and matter are brought forth into existence.

It is the presence of the ethereal essence of the spirit which gives life to all forms of matter composed from the natural elements. While abiding within the body of a living thing, the spirit seeks to maintain a balance in the forces of those elements so that they act in harmony with one another. Thereby the mortal form which the spirit inhabits is sustained until such time that it may be overcome by other elemental forces to which it is exposed. When the spirit is separated from the body at death, the mortal form soon decays and the elements which formed it are returned to their basic state from which new life and matter may be composed. Whereby the spirit may pass into another body and inhabit it anew following the death of the mortal form in which it was previously contained.

It is through the knowledge of the ethereal essence present in each aspect of creation which the gods hath wrought that understanding of their material composition may be attained, and through the virtue of this wisdom the natures of such may be mastered and made to conform to the will of the adept, and this knowledge is the essence of magic. But ever take heed that no such workings can ever be accomplished without the consent of the gods, and that such consent may only be obtained by means of proper observances and rites whereby the favor of the gods may be gained.

And it is for reason that great and wondrous marvels may be accomplished through the aid of magic, that the procedures of such undertakings must be guarded against the profane who would abuse its power for worldly ends, wherefore is such arcane knowledge entrusted only to the most worthy Ollamain whose understanding of such occult teachings is tempered by discipline and wisdom.

Moreover are the adepts of this knowledge distinguished by the methods of their operation, wherefore are those who work magic by means of enchantment and the invocation of verses and incantations known as Filid or Bards; while those who serve as oracles or seers, consulting the gods to determine their will and divining their prophecies by observing omens and other forms of augury, doth go by the name of Fátha or Vates; whereas those who perform conjuration through the practice of ceremonial rites and rituals by which the immortal gods are summoned are called Druids. Thus magic is

thereby achieved through three means - by way of speech, as also by thought, and as well by action.

All magic is effected through the power of the immortal gods and by their intercession alone is any conjuration successful. The officiant of such undertakings merely calls upon the power and influence of the gods to fulfill the object of his will, having followed ceremonial rites and propitious rituals to please the eternal deities that are invoked, whereby their favor may be gained. All of this must be performed according to certain days and hours which are counted as sacred to the particular deity to be invoked, making appropriate offerings, and pronouncing certain incantations to appeal to the gods so that the desired goal of the undertaking may be accomplished.

Likewise is it necessary for such rituals to be performed in a place that is agreeable to the nature of the gods, so that they may be inclined to intercede in behalf of those who call upon them. For this reason are shrines and temples made for the public worship of the deities, but magical operations being of an occult nature doth require consecrated sites sacred to the officiant of such undertakings alone for the purpose of individual communion with the gods. Thus are such rites carried out in some solitary place, often in a secluded grove, or amid the standing stones of a cromlech or a lonesome brug, or near the graves of the dead (for the spirits of the departed, having shed their mortal form, are more easily able to interact with the gods than are the living). In places such as these is the veil between the Siabra, which is the abode of the gods, and the mortal realm felt to be the thinnest.

chapter fourteen

the days and times of magical operation

The Áes Sídhé in their great wisdom hath ordained that time should be reckoned by its division, for even as day followeth night from one sunset to the next, so the days may be known one from another by the gods who rule them. And as the days of the moon may be counted from each new moon to the next to be eight and twenty, or two fortnights, so there are likewise as many days in each month. And as there be four weeks to each month, and thirteen months to every year; so too are there four seasons to every year with thirteen weeks to each season.

The names given to the thirteen months within the year from its beginning to its end are: An Dudlachd, Am Faoilteach, An Cial, An Gearran, Am Mairt, An Giblean, An Céitein, An t-Ogmios, An t-Iuchar, An Lunasdal, An t-Sultuine, An Damhair, and An t-Samhainn. And within these thirteen months are the four seasons: An Geamhradh, or winter; An t-Errach, or Spring; An Samhradh, or Summer; and Am Foghar, or Autumn; each season having a length of ninety-one days, from beginning to end.

Likewise the moon doth wax and wane thirteen times as the year passeth, so that a name is given to each moon in order of its time and place within the year. The moon of An Dudlachd is called Gealach Collach, or the 'Boar Moon'. The moon of Am Faoilteach is called Gealach Faol, or the 'Wolf

Moon'. The moon of An Cial is called Gealach Nathair, or the 'Serpent Moon'. The moon of An Gearran is called Gealach Capall, or the 'Horse Moon'. The moon of Am Mairt is called Gealach Fia, or the 'Deer Moon'. The moon of An Giblean is called Gealach Sionnach, or the 'Fox Moon'. The moon of An Céitein is called Gealach Bradán, or the 'Salmon Moon'. The moon of An t-Ogmios is called Gealach Rea, or the 'Ram Moon'. The moon of An t-Iuchar is called Gealach Tarbh, or the 'Bull Moon'. The moon of An Lunasdal is called Gealach Fiach, or the 'Raven Moon'. The moon of An t-Sultuine is called Gealach Seabhac, or the 'Hawk Moon'. The moon of An Damhair is called Gealach Cu, or the 'Hound Moon'. The moon of An t-Samhainn is called Gealach Cailleach, or the 'Hag Moon'

As the year doth proceed, the sun traverses a course through the thirteen constellations which lie in his path, known as the Reithes Grian or 'Wheel of the Sun.' During the month of An Dudlachd the sun is to be found in the sign of An Mhéa. In the month of Am Faoilteach the sun is in An Sgairp. During the month of An Cial the sun passeth through An Sealbhóir Nathair. In the month of An Gearran the sun is found in An Saighead. During the month of Am Mairt the sun is in An *Pocán*. In the month of An Giblean the sun passeth through An t-Uisceadóir. During the month of An Céitein the sun is found in Na hÉisc. In the month of An t-Ogmios the sun is in An Rea. During the month of An t-Iuchar the sun passeth through An Tarbh. In the month of An Lunasdal the sun is found in An Cúpla. During the month of An t-Sultuine the sun is in An Portán. In the month of An Damhair the sun passeth through An Cu. And during the month of An t-Samhainn the sun is found in An Oighbhean.

Now each month doth begin with the first day of the week which is ruled by the god of An Grian, or the sun, so that it is called Dé Bel. The second day belongeth to the goddess of An Gealach, or the moon, and her day is called Dé Danand. The third day is named for the god of war, who ruleth over the planet An Cosnaghe, and his day is called Dé Nuada. The fourth day is named for the god of skill, who ruleth over the planet An Budh, and his day is called Dé Lugh. The fifth day is named for the god of thunder, who ruleth over the planet An Bliogh, and his day is called Dé Tuireann. The sixth day is named for the goddess of fertility, who ruleth over the planet An Ribhinn, and her day is called Dé Brighid. The seventh day is named for the god of benevolence, who ruleth over the planet An t-Oiramhan, and this day is called Dé Dagda in his honor.

As each day is named for the deity who ruleth over it, on that day is it best to conduct such operations of magic which involve the conjuration of that god or goddess. And let such undertakings as doth pertain unto a good and benevolent purpose be conducted in the midst of the day when the sun is at

his highest and as the moon is waxing; while such works as have a malevolent intent be performed when the moon is waning, during the middle of the night, for at that time are rites of this sort most efficacious.

Every year doth begin and end at Samhain, which is a day belonging to no month, for the day of Samhain honors Samthainn, the father of the race of man, who was also called Cerna, the horned herdsman of the gods. For even as he was sent forth from the Áes Sídh to ruleth over the realm of the dead as Donn, the dark one; so too is the day of Samhain set apart from all other days to mark the death of the old year at the start of An Geamhradh or Winter, when the new year doth begin.

And it is on the day of Samhain that the door is opened between the world of the living and that of the dead; so that the spirits of the dead come forth and stir amongst the living. Wherefore it is the most propitious of all days to conduct operations of magic, especially those that doth concern men's fertility and vengeance against one's enemies, by calling upon the god Cerna through rites of conjuration.

The beginning of An t-Errach or Spring is observed on the festival of Imbolc which is held a week after the start of An Gearran to celebrate the return of the goddess Brighid to the Áes Sídh from her sojourn in the realm of the dead. It is on the day of Imbolc that such magical operations as concerning affairs of love and women's fertility are best undertaken through such conjurations and enchantments as serve to invoke the goddess Brighid.

The beginning of An Samhradh or Summer is marked by the festival of Beltane which is celebrated in honor of the sun god, Bel, a fortnight after the beginning of An Ceitein. On this day it is most propitious to conduct such rituals as concern health, protection and adverting evil by summoning Bel through invocations and rites of conjuration.

Am Foghar or Autumn is observed to commence on the first day of the fourth week of the month of An Lunasdal when the festival of Lughnasadh is held in honor of the god Lugh, to celebrate the first fruits of the harvest season. On Lughnasadh are such rituals as concerning prosperity, commerce and the attainment of wealth best performed by means of such incantations and conjurations that invoke the god Lugh.

Reithes Grian:

(Wheel of the Sun)

| Star Sign: | Element: | Color: | Tree: | Deity: | Month: | Moon Sign: |
|----------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------------|------------|
| An Mheá | Air | Black | Ivy | Brighid | An Dudlachd | Boar |
| An Sgairp | Water | Indigo | Broom | Nuada | Am Faoilteach | Wolf |
| An Sealbhóir Nathair | Spirit | Clear | Sloe | Bel | An Cial | Serpent |
| An Saighead | Fire | Speckled | Elder | Tuireann | An Gearran | Horse |
| An Pocán | Earth | Purple | Birch | Dagda | Am Mairt | Deer |
| An t-Uisceadóir | Air | Red | Rowan | Dagda | An Giblean | Fox |
| Na hÉisc | Water | Yellow | Alder | Tuireann | An Céitein | Salmon |
| An Rea | Fire | White | Willow | Nuada | An t-Ogmios | Ram |
| An Tarbh | Earth | Blue | Ash | Brighid | An t-Iuchar | Bull |
| An Cúpla | Air | Green | Hawthorn | Lugh | An Lunasdal | Raven |
| An Portán | Water | Dun | Oak | Danand | An t-Sultuine | Hawk |
| An Cú | Fire | Grey | Hazel | Bel | An Damhair | Hound |
| An Oighbhean | Earth | Brown | Apple | Lugh | An t-Samhainn | Hag |

Séasúir den Bhliain:

(Seasons of the Year)

| Name: | Element: | Color: | Direction: | City: | Master: | Symbol: | Animal: |
|--------------|----------|---------|------------|---------|----------|----------------|---------|
| An Geamhradh | Earth | Black | North | Falias | Morfessa | Lia Fáil | Deer |
| An t-Errach | Air | Crimson | East | Gorias | Esras | Slea Luin | Hawk |
| An Samhradh | Fire | White | South | Findias | Uiscias | Claíomh Solais | Boar |
| Am Foghar | Water | Dun | West | Murias | Semias | Coire Anseasc | Salmon |

Làithean na Seachdain:

(Days of the Week)

| Day: | Planet: | Deity: | Element: | Tree: | Color: | Metal: |
|-------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Dé Bel | An Grian | Bel | Fire | Birch | Yellow | Gold |
| Dé Danand | An Gealach | Danand | Water | Willow | White | Silver |
| Dé Nuada | An Cosnaighe | Nuada | Fire | Holly | Red | Iron |
| Dé Lugh | An Budh | Lugh | Air | Hazel | Variegated | Antimony |
| Dé Tuireann | An Bliogh | Tuireann | Air | Oak | Blue | Tin |
| Dé Brighid | An Ribhinn | Brighid | Earth | Apple | Green | Copper |
| Dé Dagda | An t-Oiramhan | Dagda | Earth | Alder | Black | Lead |

chapter fifteen

the writing called ogham

The writing called ogham is named for Oghma the god of eloquence and learning, who was the most gifted Ollamh of the Áes Sídh. As a sign of his skill he conceived the ogham letters to serve as a means of recording erudite and arcane knowledge through written characters of language that it might thereby be preserved for the learned and kept from the profane and ignorant.

And as Oghma first made these characters by cutting them with his knife upon the wood of tree branches, for this reason are the letters of ogham each named for a different tree; and so the characters of the ogham writing are themselves called feda, meaning wood, which are marked along a line called the flesc, or twig.

The trees which form the names of the ogham letters are divided into four groups, those of chieftain trees, those of peasant trees, those of shrub trees, and those of bramble trees. The chieftain trees are namely: oak, holly, apple, ash, and elm. The peasant trees are: alder, willow, poplar, rowan, and birch. The shrub trees are: sloe, elder, hawthorn, hazel and yew. The bramble trees are: gorse, heather, broom, ivy and vine.

The twenty letters of ogham are divided into four groups, each consisting of five letters. The first group being that of the Aicme Beithe, which contains

the letters Beithe, Luis, Fearn, Suil, and Nuin. The second group is that of the Aicme Huath, which includes Huath, Dair, Tinne, Coll, and Quirt. The third group is the Aicme Muin and it consists of the letters Muin, Gort, Ngetal, Straif and Ruis. The fourth group is the Aicme Ailm and this includes Ailm, Onn, Ura, Eadha and Iogh.

The use of the ogham characters is not solely for writing alone, as they also may serve to be an oracle for the purpose of divination. To this end the ogham letters should be marked upon small staves cut from the wood of the tree for which each character is named. The staves are then tossed randomly onto a new cloth of pure white linen, and after proper invocations are made to insure that the oghams may serve to reveal the will of the gods, three of the staves are chosen while looking to the heavens so that they are not seen until after they have been picked up by the one consulting them.

The answer is then determined by discerning the meanings of the characters cut upon the staves as they relate to the question posed to them. The first ogham selected represents those factors in the past that serve to affect the question at hand. The second ogham signifies the present state of the matter. The third ogham foretells the future outcome of the situation. If the answer given by the oghams is unfavorable then there should be no further consultation that day on the matter. If the response is favorable however, further confirmation should be sought by casting the oghams once more. The invocation to be used when consulting the oghams is recited as follows:

Impart, O Oghma, thy power,
And in thy power, wisdom;
And in wisdom, enlightenment;
And in enlightenment, truth;
And in truth, justice;
And in justice, love;
And in love, the blessings of the gods;
And in the blessings of the gods, all goodness.

The characters, meanings and associations of the ogham letters are thus:

| Letter: | Name: | Tree: | Divinatory Significance: | Numeric Value: | Color: |
|---------|--------|----------|--------------------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Q | Queirt | Apple | Love, attraction, beauty, perfection | 18 | Grey-brown |
| C | Coll | Hazel | Learning, meditation, wisdom | 9 | Brown |
| T | Teine | Holly | Immortality, justice, discipline | 11 | Dark grey |
| D | Dair | Oak | Strength, knowledge, truth | 12 | Black |
| H | Huath | Hawthorn | Patience, restraint, chastity | 0 | Indigo |
| N | Nuin | Ash | Transformation, change | 13 | Clear |
| S | Suil | Willow | Intuition, creativity, fertility | 16 | Grass green |
| F | Fearn | Alder | Stability, preservation, resilience | 8 | Crimson |
| L | Luis | Rowan | Life, vitality, healing | 14 | Grey |
| B | Beith | Birch | Beginning, purification | 5 | White |

| | | | | | | |
|--|----|--------|---------|-----------------------------------|----|------------|
| | I | Iogh | Yew | Death, transformation, eternity | 3 | Snow white |
| | E | Eadha | Poplar | Old age, frailty, remembrance | 2 | Rust |
| | U | Ura | Heather | Maturity, success, resolve | 0 | Amber |
| | O | Onn | Gorse | Youth, awakening, vigor | 4 | Dun |
| | A | Ailm | Elm | Regeneration, renewal | 1 | Piebald |
| | R | Ruis | Elder | Prophecy, mystery, enchantment | 15 | Red |
| | Z | Straif | Sloe | Destruction, finality, punishment | 17 | Yellow |
| | nG | nGetal | Broom | Harmony, fulfillment, cleansing | 7 | Sea green |
| | G | Gort | Ivy | Learning, achievement | 10 | Blue |
| | M | Muin | Vine | Joy, abundance, excess | 6 | Variegated |

(Note: vertical inscriptions are read from bottom to top; horizontal from left to right)

chapter sixteen

the writing called **Boibel Loth**

The form of letters known as Boibel Loth were created by Gaedel Glas son of Nuil, son of Feinius Farsaid, king of Scythia, who fashioned the language of the Gaedil from the seventy-two spoken tongues of the world; for the Pharaoh Cincris had sent for Nuil, son of Feinius, to come forth into Egypt that he might teach the youths of Egypt all the sciences and languages of the world, even as Nuil had learned them from his father in the great school founded by Feinius, which taught the multiplicity of languages. And so it was in the land of Egypt that Gaedel Glas was born unto Scota, the daughter of the Pharaoh, by Nuil son of Feinius.

The characters of the Boibel Loth were brought forth into Ireland four hundred and forty years thereafter by the descendants of Sru son of Esru, son of Gaedel Glas, when the sons of Mile came to Ireland to avenge the death of Ith son of Breogan.

The letters of the Boibel Loth script have long been used in the working of magic to form lamens or talismans which, by means of conjuration and enchantment, are endowed with great power from the immortal gods. The form of the characters are thus:

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ᚷ | ⊥ | ᚵ | ᚲ | ᚼ | ᚾ | ᚿ | ᚻ |
| B | L | F | S | N | D | T | C |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ᚷ | ᚷ | ᚷ | ᚵ | ᚵ | ᚷ | ᚷ | ᚷ |
| M | G | R | A | O | U | E | I |

chapter seventeen

the instruments for the working of magic

The Sleá Luin:

The Spear of Lugh represents the element of Air, and is symbolized by the Druid's wand. For the purpose of magical operations it is made of a wooden rod cut from a hazel tree at sunrise on the morning of the day of Lugh. Upon its shaft should be inscribed in ogham letters the words: "Sleá Luin Lugh;" the uppermost end of it should be fitted with a tip made from a crystal prism, and on the opposite end a lodestone should be affixed to its base; these undertakings being performed while reciting this incantation:

I will rise early on the morning of Dé Lugh,
I will chant this charm and spell,
I will go sunwise with my blade
To the grove of the ash tree with sure intent.
I will place my left hand to my breast,
My right hand to my heart,
I will seek the great power of he
Who has knowledge of every skill and art.
I will close my two eyes quickly,

As in deep contemplation, moving slowly;
I will stretch my left hand over thither
To the trunk of a sapling on yonder side.
I will raise my right hand on high,
I will stretch it without halt quickly,
I will bring my blade down hither,
Then shall this tree be cut.
I will take up the rod in my right hand,
I will lift it three times over my head,
I will seek ruling from the gods,
Then verily shall it be empowered.
I will set a stone on its one end,
A clear crystal of many facets;
I will inscribe in ogham letters,
Words of power upon the shaft.
From noble Esras in the shining city of Gorias
Came the Sleu Luin wielded by Lugh Lamhfada,
A great treasure of the Tuatha Dé Danann
Brought forth from Tír nan'Óg.
All powers of Air commanding,
Great virtues of the heavens possessing,
Wind and sky hearken to its control,
In the name of the eternal Sídh.

The Claiomh Solais:

The Sword of Nuada is symbolic of the element of Fire and is represented by the ceremonial blade used in magical operations. For this purpose it should be made from a new sword or dagger of fine steel, which has never been used to cut anything. The hilt of the weapon should be made of the wood of the holly tree, upon which shall be inscribed in ogham letters the words "Claiomh Solais Nuada." If possible the blade should be forged on the day of Nuada by the hand of the officiant himself, but failing this it may otherwise be obtained and consecrated on that day by placing the blade in a fire prepared for this purpose while pronouncing this incantation:

Thou flame grey, slender, curved,
Coming from the top pore of the peat,
Thou flame of leaps, breadth, heat,
Come not nigh me with thy quips.
Burning steady, gentle, generous,

Coming round about my quicken roots,
A fire fragrant, fair, and peaceful,
Nor causes dust, nor grief, nor havoc.
Heat, temper my narrow blade,
My knife will be new, sharp, clean, without stain,
In the name of Goibniu, master of the forge,
Who wrought the weapons of the gods.
From fair Uiscias in the city of Findias
Came the Claiomh Solias of Nuada Airged Lamh
Who brought forth the Tuatha Dé Danann
When the waves rose over Tir nan'Og.
All powers of Fire compelling,
Essence of the blaze possessing,
Flame and spark shall obey its command,
In the name of the eternal Sídh.

The Coire Anseasc:

The cauldron of Dagda represents the element of Water and is symbolized by the ritual cauldron or grail consecrated for use within the sacred space. To this end the officiant should make or obtain a suitable vessel on the day of Dagda, and upon its surface inscribe in ogham letters the words "Coire Anseasc Dagda." Thereafter it should be filled with fresh water from a stream while intoning the following invocation:

I will stand upon the plain,
Serene and in deep contemplation,
I will chant the rune of consecration,
Upon the copious and bountiful cauldron.
For prosperity, for plenty,
For knowledge, for wisdom,
For wealth, for contentment,
For renewal, for transformation.
The five springs of Mag Mell,
Cleansing waters upon thee pour,
To purify thy vessel walls,
To sanctify all thou wilt hold.
From Semias in the rich city of Murias
Came the Coire Anseasc of Dagda,
Wondrous treasure of the Tuatha Dé Danann
Brought forth from Tir nan'Og

All powers of Water commanding,
Essence of the wave possessing,
Tide and current shall bow to its rule,
In the name of the eternal Sídh.

The Lia Fáil:

The Stone of Fal symbolizes the element of Earth and in magical rites it is represented by a round, flat stone, upon which should be inscribed the design of a pentagram and around this in ogham letters the words “Lia Fáil Oghma.” It is consecrated on the day of Brigid by covering it with pure salt of the earth while uttering this incantation:

Come I this day to the stone
To ask the gods for its consecration,
Upon the bare soil I have placed it,
With salt of the earth I have anointed it.
Ernmass of the fertile ground,
Mother of all earthly blessing,
Enrich without hesitation all that is placed
Upon this stone of humble offering
From Morfessa, in the great city of Fálías,
Was brought the Lia Fáil by Oghma
Unto Tara’s Hill when the Tuatha Dé Danann
Came forth from Tir nan’Og.
All powers of Earth controlling,
Essence of the soil possessing,
Hill and mound shall answer its command,
In the name of the eternal Sídh.

chapter eighteen

the circle of conjunction

The form and composition of the area to be consecrated for the purpose of conducting operations of magic shall be as a circle nine feet across inscribed upon the ground; for the manner of this shape representh eternity and perfection, which is the nature of the gods who shall be invoked within its boundaries. Within the circle shall be inscribed the figure of a pentagram, which shall be drawn from five lines extending from five points of the circle equal in length and distance one from another and intersecting in the center. This is to represent the five streams of knowledge that flow forth from the well of wisdom that lies in the midst of the Plain of Joy in the realm of the gods; for these are a symbol of the five senses of man through which knowledge is obtained and also the five eternal elements from which all creation is made.

Along the outer edges of this circle shall be inscribed the names of the four great cities of the gods, which are Fálías, to be written about the northern edge of the circle; Gorias to the east; Findias to the south; and Murias to the west. Around these names shall be inscribed a second circle, larger than the first, being eleven feet across. At each of the four stations of the circle a lamp or taper should be placed just beyond the boundary of the outer circle where the names of the four cities have been written. These are to be lit during the rite of consecration and represent the watchtowers of the four

cities of knowledge that stand in the realm of the gods, from whence blow the earthly, black, northern wind of the deer; the aerial, purple, eastern wind of the hawk; the fiery, white, southern wind of the boar; and the watery, dun, western wind of the salmon.

In the midst of the circle, representing the well of knowledge shall be placed the altar on which the magical implements are arranged. Upon the four sides of the altar shall be inscribed the names of the four great Ollamain of the gods, these being Morfesa, which shall be graven upon the north side of the altar; Esras upon the east; Uiscias upon the south; and Semias upon the west.

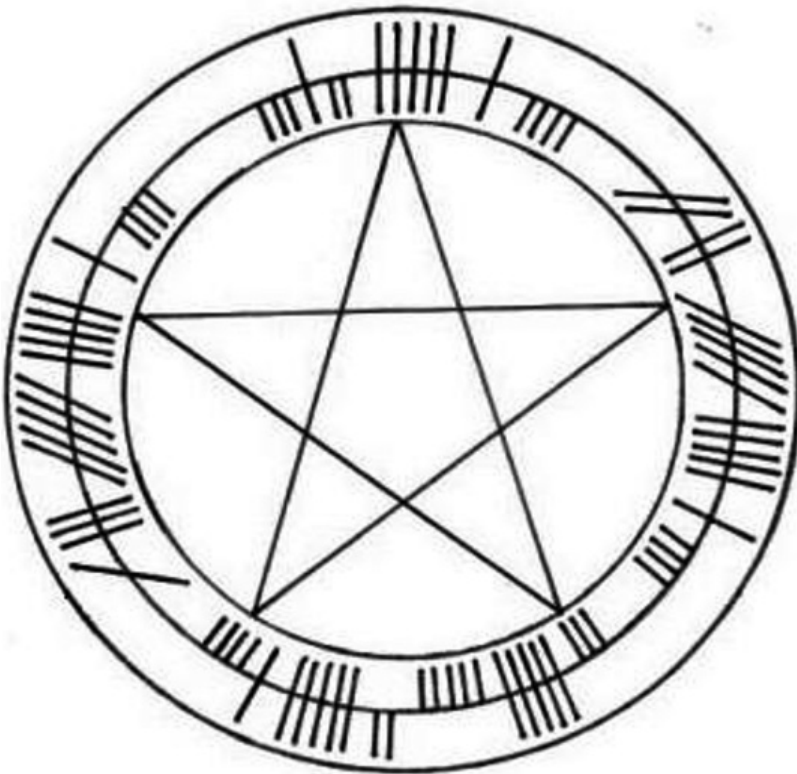


Figure of the Circle of Conjunction

Before entering the circle, those undertaking these operations should bathe themselves in clean water infused with the herb known as uil-ioc, or all-heal, while intoning the following incantation:

I will wash my face
In the nine rays of the sun,
As a mother washes her child
In the rich fermented milk.
Love be in my countenance,
Benevolence in my mind,
Dew of honey in my tongue,
My breath as the incense.
Dark is yonder town,
Dark are those therein,
I am the white swan,
Regal above them.

The officiant should then put on a clean robe of new linen, while saying:

I will travel in the name of the gods,
In the likeness of a deer, in the likeness of a hawk,
In the likeness of a boar, in the likeness of a salmon;
Stronger will it be with me than with all persons.

The circle is entered at the east. Once within its boundaries, the officiant approaches the altar facing to the west and recites this invocation:

Thou guardians of the watchtowers of the *Sídhe*
Who hast charge of this circle
From the immortal *Tuatha Dé Danann*
To make round about me
A soul shrine this night
Drive from it every distress and danger,
Surround me in my course for truth,
Be thou a bright flame before me,
Be thou a guiding star above me,
Be thou a gentle shepherd behind me.
Today, tonight, and forever.
Illuminate thou to me
Every danger in my journey,

The Lebor Feasa Runda

And guide me to the restful haven
Of Tir Tairngire.
I am a weary stranger
Lead me to the realm of Siabra
For my time has come to go forth
To the court of the Tuatha Dé Danann
To the Plain of Joy.

Having charged the circle by pronouncing this invocation, the lamps at the four stations of the circle are then lit, beginning with the one at the west, then moving to the north, east, south and finally returning to the altar all the while uttering this incantation:

Behold the lighteners of the stars
On the crests of the clouds,
And the minstrels of the sky
Celebrating them.
Descending with acclaim
From the heavens above,
Harp and lyre of song
Reverberating to them
O gods, who are the refuge of my spirit,
Why should not I raise thy fame!
Filid and bards melodious
Singing to thee.
Thou Tuatha Dé Danann,
Of exceeding white purity of beauty,
Joy were it to me to be in the fields
Of thy riches.
O beloved Sídh of the Siabra,
By day and by night
I praise thee.

The ceremonial instruments having been properly prepared and consecrated according to the rites concerning the magical implements are then arranged upon the altar by placing the Lia Fáil or stone at the north, the Sleá Luin or wand to the east, the Claiomh Solais or sword at the south, and the Coire Anseasc or cauldron to the west. In the center of the altar should be placed a bough of that plant which is called uil-ioc, or else some other green leaf-bearing branch of a tree sacred to the time and season of the operation.

Within the cauldron clean fresh water from a spring should be poured, and upon the stone pure salt of the earth should be placed. When all has been prepared, the salt is emptied into the water and incense should be placed to burn upon the Lia Fáil.

Then, taking the up the sword in thy right hand, the outline of the circle should be traced upon the ground with the tip of the sword starting at the west and walking deosil to the north, then east, then south and returning to the west, while chanting this invocation

Goddess of the moon, God of the sun,
Goddess of the earth, God of the skies,
Goddess of the rivers, God of the seas,
Who ordained to us the king of promise.

The sword is then replaced upon the altar and using the leaves of the bough, the salt and water should be drawn forth from the cauldron and sprinkled upon the ground within the circle while walking deosil around it and continuing the incantation:

Illuminate the land, illuminate the world,
Illuminate quiet seas and the waves,
Grief shall be laid aside and joy shall be raised,
Music shall be played upon harp and lyre.

This being done, take up the wand in thy right hand and with it, going around the circle, trace in the air the symbol of the pentacle at each of the four stations of the circle, beginning at the west, then moving to the north, then east, and lastly the south, while intoning:

I am the Druid established,
Going round the founded stones,
I behold the four cities,
I behold the five streams,
I behold the well of knowledge,
I behold the Tuatha Dé Danann
Coming hither in friendship to us.

The circle thus prepared is now ready as a proper place of conjuration by means of those rituals and ceremonies that invoke the gods of the Sidhe to fulfill the will of those who summon them.

And after these proceedings have been carried out and the rites concluded, the circle is closed by going to each of the four points beginning at the north, then going to the east, then south, and finally the west, extinguishing the lamp at each station, while enchanting:

I extinguish this flame
As night extinguishes day.
Blest be this circle, blest be this night,
Blest be the people all.
Who are those high in the watchtowers?
Morfesa, Esras, Uiscias, and Semias.
Over whom do they watch tonight?
Over the fair and gentle Tuatha Dé Danann.
From the four cities of Fálías, Gorias, Findias, and Murias
To guard and to keep us all
Till comes daylight tomorrow.
O may the guardians of the Sídh
Abide with me all this night,
O may the gods of the Tuatha Dé Danann
Encompass me from harm and from evil,
O encompass me from harm this night.”

Having extinguished the lamps at each of the four stations of the circle, the ceremony is concluded with this invocation:

As it was,
As it is,
As it shall be
Evermore,
With the ebb,
With the flow,
O Thou Tuatha Dé Danann
Of grace!

chapter nineteen

invocation of the goddess

Upon certain occasions, the ethereal essence of the Goddess may be found manifest for a time in corporal form within mortal women, especially maidens, who by virtue of this affinity possess the gifts of prophecy and enchantment and may serve to act as a Druidess and oracle of the Goddess who is incarnate within them. When such a maiden is found worthy of this honor, she may preside over the rites conducted within the circle of conjuration after being duly consecrated. The ritual procedure observed during this ceremony consists of the Druidess standing before the altar within the circle dressed in a clean robe of new linen. At her feet burning incense is placed upon the Lia Fáil, in her right hand is put the Claiomh Solais and in her left hand is the Sleá Luin, both being held upright while the officiant walks three times deosil about her, sprinkling her with water drawn from the Coire Anseasc which is set before her upon the altar while the following incantation is recited:

I bathe thy palms
In showers of wine,
In the lustral fire,
In the five elements,
In the juice of the rasps,

In the milk of honey,
And I place the nine pure choice graces
In thy fair fond face,
The grace of form,
The grace of voice,
The grace of fortune,
The grace of goodness,
The grace of wisdom,
The grace of charity,
The grace of choice maidenliness,
The grace of whole-souled loveliness,
The grace of goodly speech.
Dark is yonder town,
Dark are those therein,
Thou art the brown swan,
Going in among them.
Their hearts are under thy control,
Their tongues are beneath thy sole,
Nor will they ever utter a word.
A shade art thou in the heat,
A shelter art thou in the cold,
Eyes art thou to the blind,
A staff art thou to the traveler,
An island art thou at sea,
A fortress art thou on land,
A well art thou in the desert,
Health art thou to the ailing.
Thine is the skill of the *Sídhe*,
Thine is the inspiration of Brighid the maiden,
Thine is the nurturing of Danand the mother,
Thine is the wisdom of Morrigan the crone,
Thine is the beauty of Emir the lovely,
Thine is the tenderness of Darthula delightful,
Thine is the courage of Medb the strong,
Thine is the charm of Binne-bheul.
Thou art the joy of all joyous things,
Thou art the light of the beam of the sun
Thou art the door of the chief of hospitality,
Thou art the surpassing star of guidance,
Thou art the step of the deer of the hill,
Thou art the step of the steed of the plain,

Thou art the grace of the swan of swimming,
Thou art the loveliness of all lovely desires.
The lovely likeness of the Lady
Is in thy pure face,
The loveliest likeness that
Was upon earth.
The best hour of the day be thine,
The best day of the week be thine,
The best week of the year be thine,
The best year of the ages be thine.
Dagda has come and Oghma has come,
Nuada has come and Lugh has come,
Brighid and Danand have come,
Morrigan the prophetess of the *Sídhe* has come,
Goibinu the good-striker has come,
Oengus the beauteousness of the young has come,
Midhir the prince of riches has come,
And Tuireann the chief of the hosts has come,
And Brian the blessed has come,
And Cerna the herdsman of souls has come,
And Bel the brightness of the sun has come,
To bestow on thee their affection and their love.

When this incantation is concluded, the officiant kneels before the
Druidess on the opposite side of the altar as she intones:

O Goddess,
In my deeds,
In my words,
In my wishes,
In my reason,
And in the fulfilling of my desires,
In my sleep,
In my dreams,
In my repose,
In my thoughts,
In my heart and soul always,
May the inspiration of Brighid,
May the nurturing of Danand
May the wisdom of Morrigan
Be in my heart and soul always,

The Lebor Feasa Runda

May the three
Together as one
Within me dwell.

The officiant then recites the following litany to the Druidess:

Thou Queen of the moon,
Thou Queen of the sun,
Thou Queen of the planets,
Thou Queen of the stars,
Thou Queen of the globe,
Thou Queen of the sky,
Oh! lovely thy countenance,
Thou beauteous beam.
Two loops of silk
Down by thy limbs,
Smooth-skinned;
Yellow jewels
And a handful
Out of every stock of them.

chapter twenty

gathering the uil-íoc

The most sacred of all plants is that which is called uil-ioc (meaning ‘all-heal’) when it is found growing upon the branches of the oak tree. Uil-ioc is a powerful remedy against poisons and greatly enhances fertility among all living things. It must be gathered with great solemnity, on the sixth day of the new moon. He who gathers it must be attired in a clean white robe of new linen, having fasted and bathed beforehand, and ascending the tree with bare feet, the uil-ioc is held in the left hand while being cut by a golden sickle with the right hand, as the following invocation is recited:

I will gather the uil-ioc,
Of thousand blessings, of thousand virtues,
The maiden Brighid endowing it to me,
The mother Danand enriching it to me,
The cailleach Morrigan, illuminating it to me.
Come is the sixth day
To gather the uil-ioc
Of thousand blessings, of thousand virtues
The peace of the Sídh within me,
The light of the Sídh surrounding me,
The wisdom of the Sídh guiding me,
The noble plant is being gathered

The Lebor Feasa Runda

In the name of Bel the Bright One,
In the name of Tuireann the Thunderer,
In the name of Cerna the Horned One,
Who in my journey to the Land of Promise,
Will lead me to the Plain of Joy.

After being cut loose it is dropped from on high and caught in a clean white cloth of new linen. Appropriate offerings of burning incense and wine poured upon the earth are then made to the gods under the tree from whence it was taken.

chapter twenty-one

needfire

The needfire is composed of nine woods, these being Willow, Hazel, Alder, Birch, Rowan, Yew, Elm, Oak, and Ash. The fire must be lit without the aid of another flame, being kindled by hand from the wood itself by force. It is necessary to create the needfire anew each Beltane, when all old fires are extinguished and from it all new fires to be used are lit. The smoke of the Beltane needfire preserves the health of whatever living thing that is passed thrice through it. When the needfire is employed as a part of the ceremonial rites within the circle of conjuration, it may be kindled within the Coire Anseasc. As the needfire is lit, this incantation is recited:

I kindle this fire today
In the presence of the guardians of the Sidhe,
In the presence of Morfessa of the deepest wisdom
In the presence of Esras of the poetic inspiration,
In the presence of Uiscias of the noble nature,
In the presence of Semias of the generous heart.
Without malice, without jealousy, without envy,
Without fear, without terror of any one under the sun,
But the Tuatha Dé Danann to shield me.

The Lebor Feasa Runda

Great Sídhé, kindle thou in my heart within
A flame of love to my neighbor,
To my foe, to my friend, to my kindred all,
To the brave, to the knave, to the thrall,
From the lowliest thing that liveth,
To those who are highest of all.

chapter twenty- two

incense

Incense is burned within the circle of conjuration as an offering to the gods who are propitiated by its fragrance and thereby more wont to bestow their blessing upon the undertakings of the officiant. Each deity doth favor certain fumes for reason that their aspect is found to be harmonious with the nature of the divinity to whom they are offered

Having obtained the dry ingredients from which the incense is to be compounded, it should combined together in a mixture to which a small quantity of some moist substance such as wine or honey may be added for the purpose of binding it, so that the incense may be formed into a caked mass and allowed to dry, whereby it may be stored until needed.

The incense of Bel is composed of saffron, ambergris, musk, aloeswood, balsamwood, bay-laurel berries, cloves, myrrh and olibanum, being crushed together and mixed with mastic, benzoin, gum laudanum and storax.

The incense of Danand is blended from the seed of the white poppy, the leaves of malabar, myrtle and the bay tree combined with camphor and olibanum.

The incense of Nuada is made of the roots of black and white hellebore, sanders, balsamwood, aloeswood and sulphur mixed with euphorbium, bdellium, and armoniac gum.

The incense of Lugh is prepared from cinquefoil, cassia bark, bayberries, citron peel, mace, cloves and cinnamon combined with gum mastic and olibanum.

The incense of Tuireann is compounded from the seed of the ash tree, aloeswood, nutmeg and cloves mixed with storax, and benzoin resin.

The incense of Brighid is made of aloeswood, red roses, violets and saffron combined with musk and ambergris.

The incense of Dagda is composed of the seed of black poppy, henbane, mandrake root and the root of the pepperwort, mixed with olibanum and myrrh.

The incense of Cerna is blended from calamus root, juniper berries, cedarwood, patchouli, pine resin, combined with myrrh, musk and benzoin.

The incense of Morrigan is prepared from barley, crushed acorns, ivy, hellebore, and laurel, mixed with red wine and honey.

These fumes being thus prepared must likewise be burned upon a fire of wood taken from a tree held sacred to the deity unto whom the offering is being made. Whereas the birch tree belongs unto Bel, the willow unto Danand, the holly unto Nuada, the hazel unto Lugh, the oak unto Tuireann, the apple unto Brighid, the alder unto Dagda, the pine unto Cerna, and the blackthorn unto Morrigan.

Besides these, there are also fumes appropriate unto the thirteen constellations of the Roth Grian, which are: galbanum for An Mheá; opoponax for An Sgairp; bdellium for An Sealbhóir Nathair; lignum aloes for An Saighead; benzoin for An *Pocán*; euphorbium for An t-Uisceadóir; red storax for Na hÉisc; myrrh for An Rea; pepperwort for An Tarbh; mastic for An Cúpla; camphor for An Portán; olibanum for An Cu; and sanders for An *Oighbhean*.

chapter twenty- three

the oil of enlightenment

As an aid in meditation and for the procurement of visions, an oil of anointment may be made using a sufficient quantity of rendered fat to which is added a few drops of the juice from the hemlock plant together with that of wolfsbane, mandrake and nightshade. This should thereafter be compounded together with a small amount of soot. The ointment thus made is applied lightly to the temples of the forehead and upon the inner part of the wrists while chanting:

The gods above me, the gods below me,
The gods before me, the gods behind me,
I am upon thy path, O gods;
Thou, O gods, be in my steps.
The prophecy made by Morrigan to the Tuatha Dé Danann,
The journey made by Brighid to Tech Duinn,
Knowest thou of it, O Eochaidh Ollathair?
Said Eochaidh Ollathair that he knew.
The prophecy made by Morrigan to the Tuatha Dé Danann,
When they were for a time at conflict,
Knowledge of truth, not knowledge of falsehood,

The Lebor Feasa Runda

That I shall truly see all in my quest.
Lugh son of Cian, most skilled of all the Sidhe,
Givest thou unto me eyes to see all my quest,
With grace that shall never fail, before me,
That shall never fail nor dim.

chapter twenty-

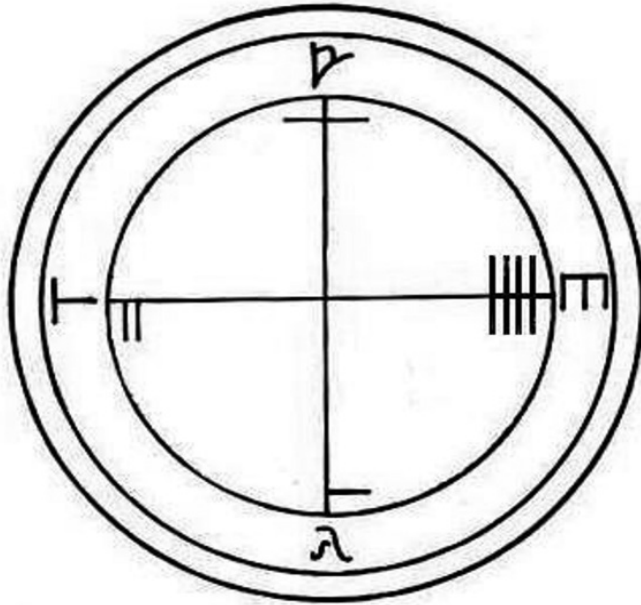
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the making of lamens or

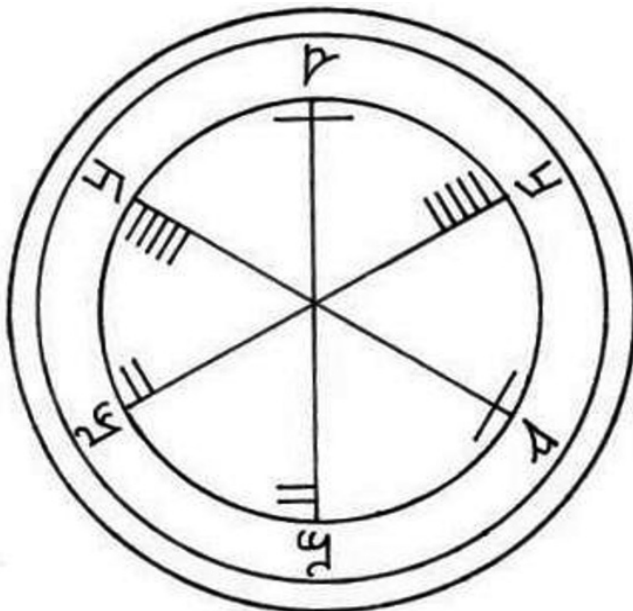
talismans

The lamen or talisman is a magical device constructed by the possessor and carried on the body for the purpose of assuring the blessings of the god or goddess to whom it has been dedicated. Each lamen bears upon it the name and sigil of the deity to which it has been consecrated and should be worn when conducting rites that pertain to that entity. It must be constructed within the circle of conjuration upon the day sacred to the divinity whose power it will hold; being fashioned from the metal appropriate to that god or goddess and attached to a chain of sufficient length to be worn around the neck so that it hangs over the heart. It is then consecrated with the four elements by first being placed upon the Lia Fáil and covered with salt of the earth, after which it is passed through the fumes of incense appropriate to the deity to whom it is dedicated, being suspended from its chain on the end of the Sleá Luin. It is then passed through the flames of a fire kindled from wood of the tree sacred to the divinity for which it has been made, being held upon blade of the Claiomh Solais. Finally it is placed within the Coire Anseasc and cleansed in pure water. The talisman is then to be placed about the neck while reciting the following incantation:

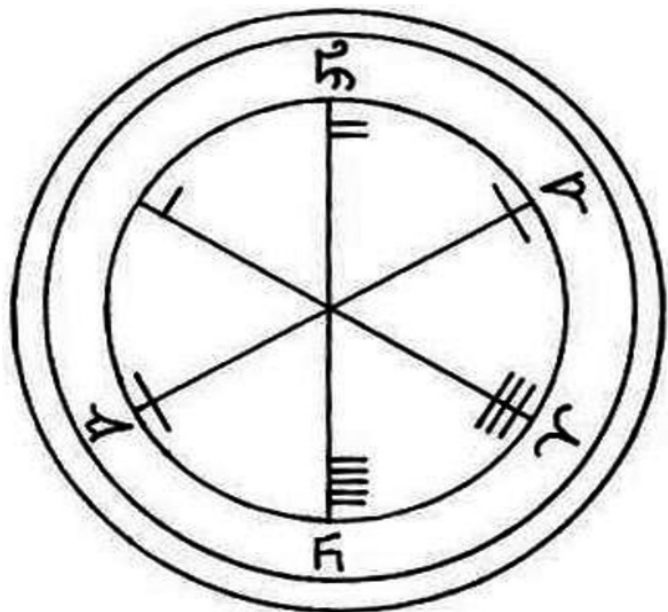
I place this charm upon my body,
And on my prosperity,
The charm of the gods of life
For my protection.
The charm that Brighid of the Sídh
Put round the fair neck of Oengus,
The charm that Danand put about her sons,
Between sole and throat,
Between pap and knee,
Between back and breast,
Between chest and sole,
Between eye and hair.
The host of the Sídh on my side,
The shield of the Sídh on my shoulder,
There is not between heaven and earth
That can overcome the Tuatha Dé Danann.
No spear shall rive me,
No sea shall drown me,
No woman shall wile me,
No man shall wound me.
The mantle of Manannan himself about me,
The shadow of the Tuatha Dé Danann above me,
From the crown of my head
To the soles of my feet.
I shall never know disgrace.
I shall go forth in the name of my king,
I shall come in name of my chief,
To the gods of life I now belongeth wholly,
And to all the powers together.
I place this charm early on this day,
In passage hard, brambly, thorny,
I go out and the charm about my body,
And have not the least fear upon me.
I shall ascend the crest of the hill,
Protected I shall be behind me,
I am the calm swan in battle,
Preserved I shall be amidst the slaughter,
Stand I canst against five hundred,
And mine oppressors shall be seized.
The charm of the gods about me!



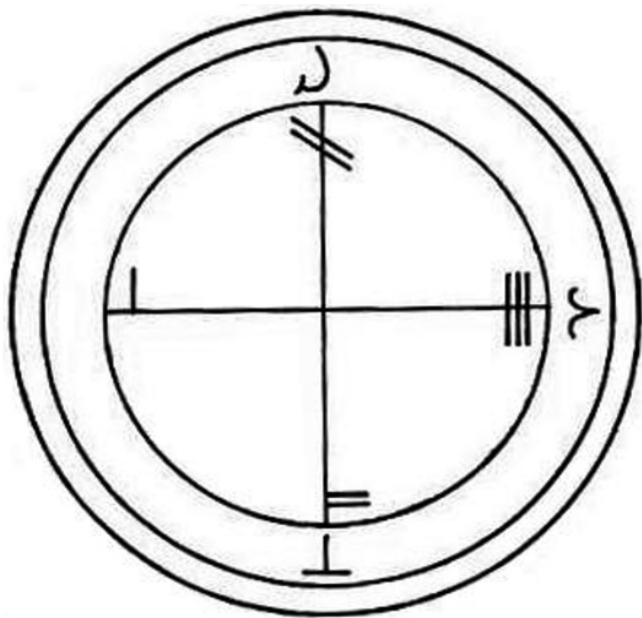
The form of the talisman of Bel to be inscribed upon a disc of gold



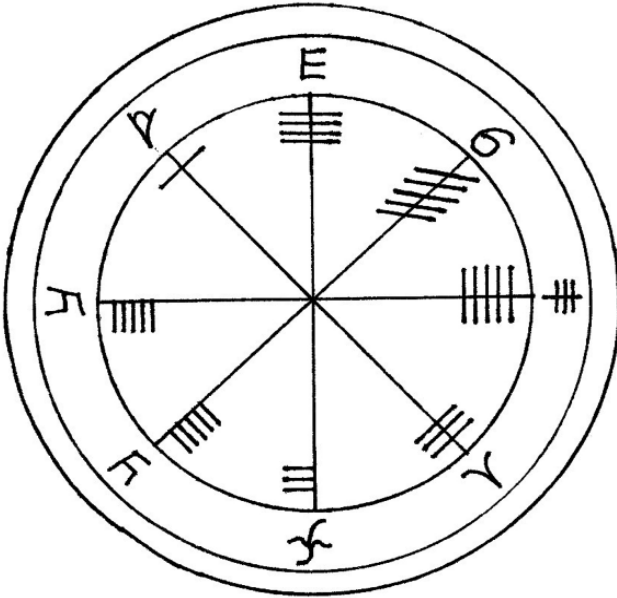
The form of the talisman of Danand to be inscribed upon a disc of silver



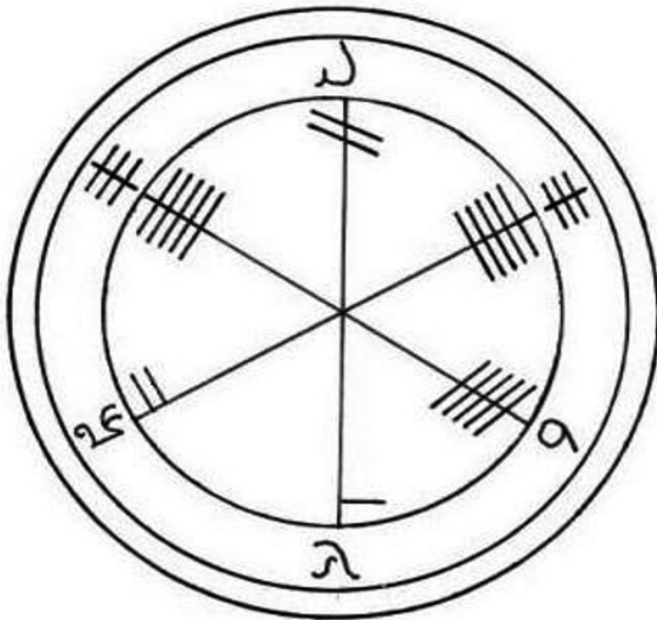
The form of the talisman of Nuada to be inscribed upon a disc of iron



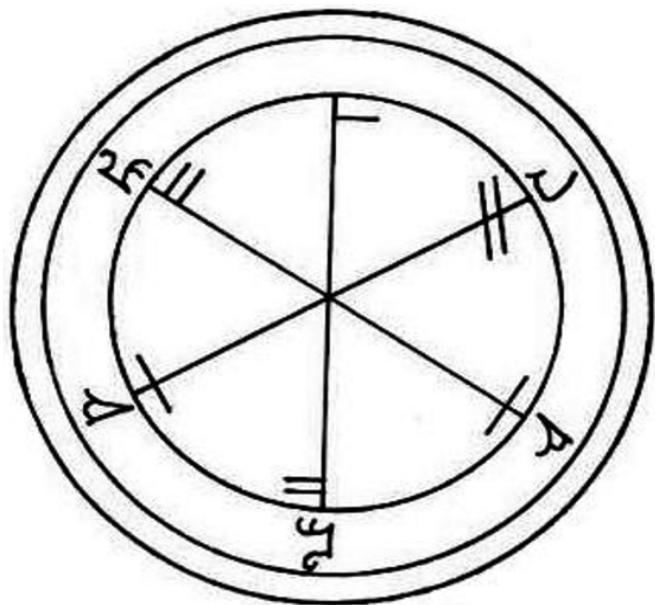
The form of the talisman of Lugh to be inscribed upon a disc of antimony



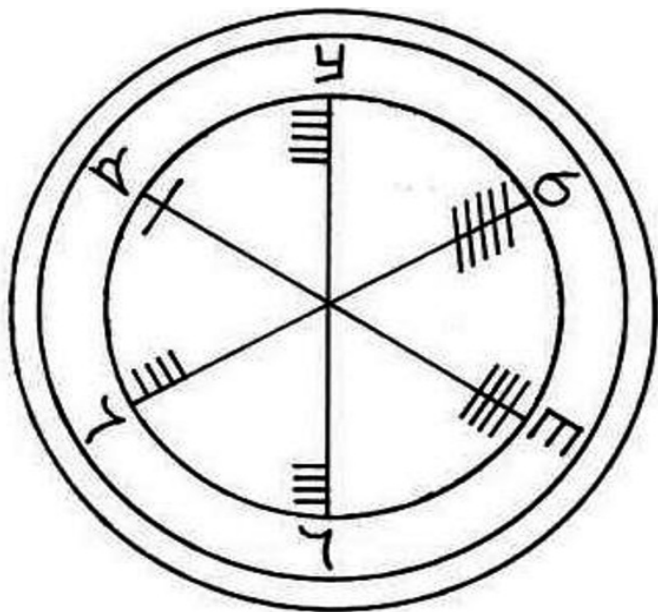
The form of the talisman of Tuireann to be inscribed upon a disc of tin



The form of the talisman of Brighid to be inscribed upon a disc of copper



The form of the talisman of Dagda to be inscribed upon a disc of lead



The form of the talisman of Cerna to be inscribed upon a disc of bronze

chapter twenty-five

íMBOLC RÍTUÁL

On the day of Imbolc it is traditional to prepare a quantity of porridge from oats cooked together with butter, milk, eggs and honey. This is given as an offering to Brighid, for bounty and prosperity in the year ahead. The porridge should drawn forth from the cauldron with a ladle and cast about upon the ground, while saying:

A measure for thy age, O goddess;
A measure for thy greatness,
A measure for thy voice,
A flood for thy appetite.
For thy share of the delicate,
Curd and kail;
For thy share of the taking,
Honey and warm milk.
For thy share of the supping,
Whisked whey and cream;
For thy share of the spoil,
With bow and with spear.
For thy share of the preparation,
The golden eggs of Errach;
For thy share of the treat,

My treasure and my joy.
For thy share of the feast
With gifts and with tribute;
For thy share of the treasure,
Pulset of my love.
For thy share of the chase,
Up the face of the hills;
For thy share of the hunting
And the ruling over hosts.
For thy share of palaces,
In the courts of kings;
For thy share of Siabra
With its goodness and its peace.
The part of thee that is not manifest in the waxing moon,
May it be manifest in the full moon;
The part of thee that is not manifest in the full moon,
May it be manifest in the waning moon.
The three measures
For the goddess,
To preserve us
From every envy,
Evil eye and death;
The measure of the alluring maiden,
The measure of the fertile mother,
The measure of the wise crone,
Brighid, Danand, and Morrigan
Of the Sídh.

Afterwards a sheaf of oats which has been fashioned into an effigy and dressed in women's clothing is brought forth and carefully laid in a large basket woven from birch twigs with a wooden cudgel placed beside it, while saying: "Brighid, Brighid, come in, your bed is ready." When the corn doll has been placed within the basket, the exclamation "Brighid is come, Brighid is welcome!" is repeated thrice, before uttering, "Up with the spring!"

chapter twenty-six

Beltane Rítual

On the eve of Beltane the needfire is kindled anew and from its flames the balefire is lit. The smoke of the balefire offers protection for aught that is passed through it, and it is a custom that jumping thrice over the fire ensures good health and fortune during the rest of the year. Oatcakes fashioned with nine raised knobs being prepared are brought to the balefire and are broken apart while standing before it, the pieces being cast over the shoulder while saying:

Bless, O Bel, true and bountiful,
Myself, my loved ones, and my family,
My tender children and their beloved mother at their head.
On the fragrant plain, in the joyful mountain shelter,
Everything within my dwelling and in my possession,
All cattle and crops, all flocks and corn,
From Beltane Eve to Samhain Eve,
With goodly progress and gentle blessing,
From sea to sea, and every river mouth,
From wave to wave, and at the base of the waterfall.
Be the god shining down blessing upon all to me belonging;
Be the bright sun protecting me in truth.

Oh! fulfill my spirit and encompass my loved ones within the rays of
thy glory.
Bless everything and everyone,
Of this humble house of my keeping;
Place the blessing of the *Sídhe* upon us with the power of the gods,
Until we arrive in *Tir Tairngire*.
When the cattle shall forsake the stalls,
When the sheep shall forsake the folds,
When the deer shall ascend to the mount of mist,
May the light of the Sun follow them,
Thou *Bel* who didst create all in the beginning,
Listen and attend me as I pray to thee,
Morning and evening as is becoming in me,
In thine own presence, O god of the sun.

chapter twenty- seven

Lughnasadh ritual

On Lughnasadh the fruits of the harvest are celebrated. Bannocks are prepared to be given as offerings along with spirits brewed from grain. An effigy formed from a sheaf of the last year's wheat is brought out and carried aloft upon a pole in procession to the field where the offerings of the harvest are made. These are placed upon the ground of the field while the company in attendance gathers with joined hands to form a circle about the corn figure and dances deosil around it while singing songs of the season. Thereafter all partake of ale and bannocks.

The effigy of the last year's harvest is then taken down from the pole and solemnly buried in the field, while saying:

Gods, bless thou thyselfes my reaping,
Each ridge, and plain, and field,
Each sickle curved, shapely, hard,
Each ear and handful in the sheaf.
Bless each maiden and youth,
Each woman and tender infant,
Safeguard them beneath thy shield of strength,
And guard them in the house of the Sidhe.

The Lebor Feasa Runda

Encompass each goat, sheep and lamb,
Each cow and horse, and store,
Surround Thou the Rocks and herds,
And tend them to a kindly fold.
For the sake of Lugh master of all talents,
Of Danand fair-skinned branch of grace,
Of Brighid smooth-white of ringleted locks,
Of Donn of the graves and tombs.

A new figure, fashioned from a sheaf of the fresh harvest being made,
is then hung upon the pole and brought home with much festivity and
celebration.

chapter twenty- eight

samhain ritual

On eve of Samhain it is a tradition to construct a large figure of human form woven from limbs and branches and adorned with leaves and greenery which is attended in a ceremonial procession. Beneath it a pyre is constructed and at midnight it is set ablaze while saying:

Hail Cerna! blessed is he!
The god of whom we praise.
This night is the eve of Samhain,
Returned is the father of men,
The hooves of his feet tread the earth once more,
The hunter has come down from the hill,
The gates of life and death are opened to him,
All hail! let there be joy!
The peace of earth to him, the joy of heaven to him,
Behold the hooves of his feet trod the world;
The homage of a king be his, the welcome of a father be his,
King all victorious, father all glorious,
Forest and field illuminated to him,
All hail! let there be joy!

The mountains glowed to him, the plains glowed to him,
The voice of the wind with the song of forest,
Announcing to us that Cerna has returned,
Father of man from the land of the dead;
Shone the moon on the hills to him,
All hail! let there be joy!
Shone to him the earth and stars together,
The gods of the *Sídhe* have opened the door;
Father of men, hasten thou to help me,
Thou Cerna, O Horned One!
Thou gatekeeper of the land of the dead,
Hunter upon hill and woodland,
All hail! let there be joy!

Those in attendance then gather around and dance *deosil* about the burning figure in festive celebration while bones and antlers of animals slain from hunting and husbandry are cast into the flames. Afterwards all partake of feasting and merriment, with offerings of food and drink being left out for the spirits of the dead who freely roam among the living on this night.

chapter twenty- nine

consecration of a child

The following incantation is recited on the occasion of rituals whereby newborn children are passed thrice through the cleft of a forked Rowan or Ash tree, or through a hoop made from the branches thereof, as a means of protecting them from harm and to bestow good fortune upon them.

Thou beings who inhabitest the heights
Imprint thy blessing betimes,
Remember thou the child of my body,
In name of the gods of peace;
When the Druid of the King
On him puts the water of meaning,
Grant him the blessing of the Tuatha De Danann
Who fill the heights.
Sprinkle down upon him thy grace,
Give thou to him virtue and growth,
Give thou to him strength and guidance,
Give thou to him flocks and possessions,

The Lebor Feasa Runda

Sense and reason void of guile,
Sídhe wisdom in his day,
That he may stand without reproach
In thy presence.

chapter thirty

the feth-fiada

The feth-fiada is a spell by which the spirit of a living man or woman can be made to inhabit the consciousness of an animal while in a state of trance. In so doing, knowledge of the ways and experiences of other creatures may be acquired; thereby attaining an alternate perspective through learning how reality is perceived by other beings. Once a trance state has been achieved; the subject's spirit is directed by reciting the following incantation:

Feth-Fiada
Will I make on thee,
By the augury of Danand,
By the corslet of Brighid,
From sheep, from ram,
From goat, from buck,
From fox, from wolf,
From sow, from boar,
From dog, from cat,
From hippe-bear,
From wilderness-dog,
From watchful scan,
From cow, from horse,
From bull, from heifer,

The Lebor Feasa Runda

From daughter, from son,
From the birds of the air,
From the creeping things of the earth,
From the fishes of the sea,
From the tempests of the storm.

chapter thirty-one

Love spell

A spell of love for thee,
Water drawn through a reed,
The love of [s]he thou choosest,
With their love to draw to thee.
Arise thou early on the day of Bel,
To the broad flat rock of the shore
Take with thee the foxglove,
And the butter-bur.
A small quantity of embers
In the skirt of thy kirtle,
A choice handful of sea-weed
In a wooden shovel
Three bones of an old man,
Newly dug from the grave,
Nine stems of royal fern,
Newly trimmed with an axe.
Burn them on a fire of faggots
And make them all into ashes;
Sprinkle in the fleshy breast of thy lover,

The Lebor Feasa Runda

Against the sting of the north wind.
Go round the brug of procreation,
The circuit of the five turns,
And I will vow and warrant thee
That [wo]man shall never leave thee.

chapter thirty-two

the making of effigies

To cause the destruction of an enemy through magical means it is necessary to compose an image of them in clay or wax which, being done within the circle of conjuration, is purposely maimed in such a manner so as to cause a likewise affliction upon the body of the person who is represented by the effigy. If it is desired that their destruction should be accomplished slowly, by means of afflicting them with fevers and sickness, the image should be made of wax and buried in the ground so that it is slowly consumed by the earth. If a more immediate destruction is desired however, then an effigy of clay should be fashioned using earth taken from a newly dug grave mixed with the ashes of a burnt rib-bone of a man or woman, whichever the image is to represent, together with the inner-pith from the wood of an elder tree and a black spider, all of which is to be moistened with water in which toads have been washed, so that the mixture is made soft enough to be formed into the shape and likeness of the one it is to represent.

Having thus composed the image, it is thereafter to be conjured in the name of the enemy who destruction it will cause, saying: "This is N. _____, ordained to be consumed at my instance." Whereupon the effigy is stuck with a pin or thorn in that part of the body desired to be afflicted, and if stuck into the heart it will bring about the death of the person named within nine days. Afterwards the image is buried beneath the ground in the most damp location possible, while reciting this incantation:

The wicked who would do me harm
May his throat be diseased,
Globularly, spirally, circularly,
Fluxy, pellety, horny-grim.
Be it harder than the stone,
Be it blacker than the coal,
Be it swifter than the duck,
Be it heavier than the lead.
Be it fiercer, sharper, harsher, more malignant,
Than the hard, wound-quivering holly,
Be it sourer than the sained, lustrous, bitter, salt;
Seven times seven.
Turning thither,
Wavering hither,
Staggering downwards,
Floundering upwards.
Drivelling outwards,
Snivelling inwards,
Oft hurrying out,
Seldom coming in.
A wisp the portion of each hand,
A foot in the base of each pillar,
A leg the prop of each jamb,
A flux driving and dragging him.
An infection of blood from heart, from bones,
From the liver, from the lobe, from the lungs,
And a searching of veins, of throat, and of kidneys,
To my enemies and traducers.
In name of the mighty Tuatha Dé Danann,
Who guard me from every evil,
And who shield me in strength,
From the net of my breakers
And destroyers.

chapter thirty- three

to avert the evil eye

I tread upon the evil eye,
As treads the duck upon the lough,
As treads the swan upon the water,
As treads the horse upon the plain,
As treads the cow upon the pasture,
As treads the host of the elements.
Power of wind I have over it,
Power of wrath I have over it,
Power of fire I have over it,
Power of thunder I have over it,
Power of lightning I have over it,
Power of storms I have over it,
Power of moon I have over it,
Power of sun I have over it,
Power of stars I have over it,
Power of firmament I have over it,
Power of the heavens
And of the worlds I have over it,
A portion of it upon the grey stones,

The Lebor Feasa Runda

A portion of it upon the steep hills,
A portion of it upon the fast falls,
A portion of it upon the fair meads,
And a portion upon the great salt sea,
She herself is the best instrument to carry it,
The great salt sea.
In name of the three immortal goddesses,
In name of maiden, mother and crone,
In name of all the secret ones,
And of the powers together.

Here ends the Lebor Feasa Rúnda



**"The Lebor Feasa Rúnda represents the most significant revelation of ancient Celtic beliefs and authentic Druid teachings ever published....truly a treasure."
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